

THE DIAL



MARCH 1924

DEATH IN VENICE

BY THOMAS MANN

Translated From the German by Kenneth Burke

ON a spring afternoon of the year 19—, when our continent lay under such threatening weather for whole months, Gustav Aschenbach, or von Aschenbach as his name read officially after his fiftieth birthday, had left his apartment on the Prinzregentenstrasse in Munich and had gone for a long walk. Overwrought by the trying and precarious work of the forenoon—which had demanded a maximum wariness, prudence, penetration, and rigour of the will—the writer had not been able even after the noon meal to break the impetus of the productive mechanism within him, that *motus animi continuus* which constitutes, according to Cicero, the foundation of eloquence; and he had not attained the healing sleep which—with the increasing exhaustion of his strength—he needed in the middle of each day. So he had gone outdoors soon after tea, in the hopes that air and movement would restore him and prepare him for a profitable evening.

It was the beginning of May, and after cold, damp weeks a false midsummer had set in. The English Gardens, although the foliage was still fresh and sparse, were as pungent as in August, and in the parts nearer the city had been full of conveyances and promenaders. At the Aumeister, which he had reached by quieter and quieter paths, Aschenbach had surveyed for a short time the Wirtsgarten with its lively crowds and its border of cabs and carriages. From here, as the sun was sinking, he had started home, outside the park, across the open fields; and since he felt tired and a storm was threatening

from the direction of Föhring, he waited at the North Cemetery for the tram which would take him directly back to the city.

It happened that he found no one in the station or its vicinity. There was not a vehicle to be seen, either on the paved Ungererstrasse, with its solitary glistening rails stretching out towards Schwabing, or on the Föhringer Chaussee. Behind the fences of the stone-masons' establishments, where the crosses, memorial tablets, and monuments standing for sale formed a second, uninhabited burial ground, there was no sign of life; and opposite him the Byzantine structure of the Funeral Hall lay silent in the reflection of the departing day; its façade, ornamented in luminous colours with Greek crosses and hieratic paintings, above which were displayed inscriptions symmetrically arranged in gold letters, and texts chosen to bear on the life beyond; such as, "They enter into the dwelling of the Lord," or, "The light of eternity shall shine upon them." And for some time as he stood waiting he found a grave diversion in spelling out the formulas and letting his mind's eye lose itself in their transparent mysticism, when, returning from his reveries, he noticed in the portico, above the two apocalyptic animals guarding the steps, a man whose somewhat unusual appearance gave his thoughts an entirely new direction.

Whether he had just now come out from the inside through the bronze door, or had approached and mounted from the outside unobserved, remained uncertain. Aschenbach, without applying himself especially to the matter, was inclined to believe the former. Of medium height, thin, smooth-shaven, and noticeably pug-nosed, the man belonged to the red-haired type and possessed the appropriate fresh milky complexion. Obviously, he was not of Bavarian extraction, since at least the white and straight-brimmed straw hat that covered his head gave his appearance the stamp of a foreigner, of someone who had come from a long distance. To be sure, he was wearing the customary knapsack strapped across his shoulders, and a belted suit of rough yellow wool; his left arm was resting on his thigh, and his grey storm cape was thrown across it. In his right hand he held a cane with an iron ferrule, which he had stuck diagonally into the ground, and, with his feet crossed, was leaning his hip against the crook. His head was raised so that the Adam's apple protruded hard and bare on a scrawny neck emerging from a loose sport-shirt. And he was staring sharply off into the distance, with colourless, red-lidded eyes between which stood two strong,

vertical wrinkles peculiarly suited to his short, turned-up nose. Thus—and perhaps his elevated position helped to give the impression—his bearing had something majestic and commanding about it, something bold, or even savage. For whether he was grimacing because he was blinded by the setting sun, or whether it was a case of a permanent distortion of the physiognomy, his lips seemed too short, they were so completely pulled back from his teeth that these were exposed even to the gums, and stood out white and long.

It is quite possible that Aschenbach, in his half-distracted, half-inquisitive examination of the stranger, had been somewhat inconsiderate, for he suddenly became aware that his look was being answered, and indeed so militantly, so straight in the eye, so plainly with the intention of driving the thing through to the very end and compelling him to capitulate, that he turned away uncomfortably and began walking along by the fences, deciding casually that he would pay no further attention to the man. The next minute he had forgotten him. But perhaps the exotic element in the stranger's appearance had worked on his imagination; or a new physical or spiritual influence of some sort had come into play. He was quite astonished to note a peculiar inner expansion, a kind of roving unrest, a youthful longing after far-off places: a feeling so vivid, so new, or so long dormant and neglected, that, with his hands behind his back and his eyes on the ground, he came to a sudden stop, and examined into the nature and purport of this emotion.

It was the desire for travel, nothing more; although, to be sure, it had attacked him violently, and was heightened to a passion, even to the point of an hallucination. His yearnings crystallized; his imagination, still in ferment from his hours of work, actually pictured all the marvels and terrors of a manifold world which it was suddenly struggling to conceive. He saw a landscape, a tropical swampland under a heavy, murky sky, damp, luxuriant, and enormous, a kind of prehistoric wilderness of islands, bogs, and arms of water, sluggish with mud; he saw, near him and in the distance, the hairy shafts of palms rising out of a rank lecherous thicket, out of places where the plant-life was fat, swollen, and blossoming exorbitantly; he saw strangely misshapen trees sending their roots into the ground, into stagnant pools with greenish reflections; and here, between floating flowers which were milk-white and large as dishes, birds of a strange nature, high-shouldered, with crooked bills, were standing in the muck, and looking motionlessly

to one side; between dense, knotted stalks of bamboo he saw the glint from the eyes of a crouching tiger—and he felt his heart knocking with fear and with puzzling desires. Then the image disappeared; and with a shake of his head Aschenbach resumed his walk along past the fences of the stone-masons' establishments.

Since the time, at least, when he could command the means to enjoy the advantages of moving about the world as he pleased, he had considered travelling simply as an hygienic precaution which must be complied with now and then despite one's feelings and one's preferences. Too busy with the tasks arranged for him by his interest in his own ego and in the problems of Europe, too burdened with the onus of production, too little prone to diversion, and in no sense an amateur of the varied amusements of the great world, he had been thoroughly satisfied with such knowledge of the earth's surface as any one can get without moving far out of his own circle; and he had never even been tempted to leave Europe. Especially now that his life was slowly on the decline, and that the artist's fear of not having finished—this uneasiness lest the clock run down before he had done his part and given himself completely—could no longer be waived aside as a mere whim, he had confined his outer existence almost exclusively to the beautiful city which had become his home and to the rough country house which he had built in the mountains and where he spent the rainy summers.

Further, this thing which had laid hold of him so belatedly, but with such suddenness, was very readily moderated and adjusted by the force of his reason and of a discipline which he had practised since youth. He had intended carrying his life work forward to a certain point before removing to the country. And the thought of knocking about the world for months and neglecting his work during this time, seemed much too lax and contrary to his plans; it really could not be considered seriously. Yet he knew only too well what the reasons were for this unexpected temptation. It was the urge to escape—he admitted to himself—this yearning for the new and the remote, this appetite for freedom, for unburdening, for forgetfulness; it was a pressure away from his work, from the steady drudgery of a coldly passionate service. To be sure, he loved this work and almost loved the enervating battle that was fought daily between a proud tenacious will—so often tested—and this growing weariness which no one was to suspect and which must not betray itself in his productions by any sign of weakness or

negligence. But it seemed wise not to draw the bow overtightly, and not to strangle by sheer obstinacy so strongly persistent an appetite. He thought of his work, thought of the place at which yesterday and now again to-day he had been forced to leave off, and which, it seemed, would yield neither to patience and coaxing nor to a definite attack. He examined it again, trying to break through or to circumvent the deadlock, but he gave up with a shudder of repugnance. There was no unusual difficulty here; what balked him were the scruples of aversion, which took the form of a fastidious insatiability. Even as a young man this insatiability had meant to him the very nature, the fullest essence, of talent; and for that reason he had restrained and chilled his emotions, since he was aware that they incline to content themselves with a happy approximation, a state of semi-completion. Were these enslaved emotions now taking their vengeance on him, by leaving him in the lurch, by refusing to forward and lubricate his art; and were they bearing off with them every enjoyment, every live interest in form and expression?

Not that he was producing anything bad; his years gave him at least this advantage, that he felt himself at all times in full and easy possession of his craftsmanship. But while the nation honoured him for this, he himself was not content; and it seemed to him that his work lacked the marks of that fiery and fluctuating emotionalism which is an enormous thing in one's favour, and which, while it argues an enjoyment on the part of the author, also constitutes, more than any depth of content, the enjoyment of the amateur. He feared the summer in the country, alone in the little house with the maid who prepared his meals, and the servant who brought them to him. He feared the familiar view of the mountain peaks and the slopes which would stand about him in his boredom and his discontent. Consequently there was need of a break in some new direction. If the summer was to be endurable and productive, he must attempt something out of his usual orbit; he must relax, get a change of air, bring an element of freshness into the blood. To travel, then—that much was settled. Not far, not all the way to the tigers. But one night on the sleeper, and a rest of three or four weeks at some pleasant popular resort in the South. . . .

He thought this out while the noise of the electric tram came nearer along the Ungererstrasse; and as he boarded it he decided to devote the evening to the study of maps and time-tables. On the

platform it occurred to him to look around for the man in the straw hat, his companion during that most significant time spent waiting at the station. But his whereabouts remained uncertain, as he was not to be seen either at the place where he was formerly standing, or anywhere else in the vicinity of the station, or on the car itself.

II

The author of that lucid and powerful prose epic built around the life of Frederick of Prussia; the tenacious artist who, after long application, wove rich, varied strands of human destiny together under one single predominating theme in the fictional tapestry known as *Maya*; the creator of that stark tale which is called *The Wretch* and which pointed out for an entire oncoming generation the possibility of some moral certainty beyond pure knowledge; finally, the writer (and this sums up briefly the works of his mature period) of the impassioned treatise on Art and the Spirit, whose capacity for mustering facts, and, further, whose fluency in their presentation, led cautious judges to place this treatise alongside Schiller's conclusions on naïve and sentimental poetry—Gustav Aschenbach, then, was the son of a higher law official, and was born in L——, a leading city in the Province of Silesia. His forbears had been officers, magistrates, government functionaries, men who had led severe, steady lives serving their king, their state. A deeper strain of spirituality had been manifest in them once, in the person of a preacher; the preceding generation had brought a brisker, more sensuous blood into the family through the author's mother, daughter of a Bohemian band-master. The traces of foreignness in his features came from her. A marriage of sober painstaking conscientiousness with impulses of a darker, more fiery nature had had an artist as its result, and this particular artist.

Since his whole nature was centred around acquiring a reputation, he showed himself, if not exactly precocious, at least (thanks to the firmness and pithiness of his personality, his accent) ripened and adjusted to the public at an early age. Almost as a schoolboy he had made a name for himself. Within ten years he had learned to face the world through the medium of his writing-table, to discharge the obligations of his fame in a correspondence which (since many claims are pressed on the successful, the trustworthy) had to be brief as well as pleasant and to the point. At forty,

w
g
as
or

d
er
o
al
is
g
re
ts
e
is
al
f
t
n
h
e
.
s
d
i
o
n
h
e
.
.

wearied by the vicissitudes and the exertion of his own work, he had to manage a daily mail which bore the postmarks of countries in all parts of the world.

Equally removed from the banal and the eccentric, his talents were so constituted as to gain both the confidence of the general public and the stable admiration and sympathy of the critical. Thus even as a young man continually devoted to the pursuit of craftsmanship—and that of no ordinary kind—he had never known the careless freedom of youth. When, around thirty-five years of age, he had been taken ill in Vienna, one sharp observer said of him in company, "You see, Aschenbach has always lived like this," and the speaker contracted the fingers of his left hand into a fist; "never like this," and he let his open hand droop comfortably from the arm of his chair. That hit the mark; and the heroic, the ethical about it all was that he was not of a strong constitution, and though he was pledged by his nature to these steady efforts, he was not really born to them.

Considerations of ill-health had kept him from attending school as a boy, and had compelled him to receive instruction at home. He had grown up alone, without comrades—and he was forced to realize soon enough that he belonged to a race which often lacked, not talent, but that physical substructure which talent relies on for its fullest fruition: a race accustomed to giving its best early, and seldom extending its faculties over the years. But his favourite phrase was "carrying through"; in his novel on Frederick he saw the pure apotheosis of this command, which struck him as the essential concept of the virtuous in action and passion. Also, he wished earnestly to grow old, since he had always maintained that the only artistry which can be called truly great, comprehensive, yes even truly admirable, is that which is permitted to bear fruits characteristic of each stage in human development.

Since he must carry the responsibilities of his talent on frail shoulders, and wanted to go a long way, the primary requirement was discipline—and fortunately discipline was his direct inheritance from his father's side. By forty, fifty, or at an earlier age when others are still slashing about with enthusiasm, and are contentedly putting off to some later date the execution of plans on a large scale, he would start the day early, dashing cold water over his chest and back, and then with a couple of tall wax candles in silver candlesticks at the head of his manuscript, he would pay out

to his art, in two or three eager, scrupulous morning hours, the strength which he had accumulated in sleep. It was pardonable, indeed it was a direct tribute to the effectiveness of his moral scheme, that the uninitiated took his Maya world, and the massive epic machinery upon which the life of the hero Frederick was unrolled, as evidence of long breath and sustaining power. While actually they had been built up layer by layer, in small daily allotments, through hundreds and hundreds of single inspirations. And if they were so excellent in both composition and texture, it was solely because their creator had held out for years under the strain of one single work, with a steadiness of will and a tenacity comparable to that which conquered his native province; and because, finally, he had turned over his most vital and valuable hours to the problem of minute revision.

In order that a significant work of the mind may exert immediately some broad and deep effect, a secret relationship, or even conformity, must exist between the personal destiny of the author and the common destiny of his contemporaries. People do not know why they raise a work of art to fame. Far from being connoisseurs, they believe that they see in it hundreds of virtues which justify so much interest; but the true reason for their applause is an unconscious sympathy. Aschenbach had once stated quite plainly in some remote place that nearly everything great which comes into being does so in spite of something—in spite of sorrow or suffering, poverty, destitution, physical weakness, depravity, passion, or a thousand other handicaps. But that was not merely an observation; it was a discovery, the formula of his life and reputation, the key to his work. And what wonder then that it was also the distinguishing moral trait, the dominating gesture, of his most characteristic figures?

Years before, one shrewd analyst had written of the new hero-type to which this author gave preference, and which kept turning up in variations of one sort or another: he called it the conception of "an intellectual and youthful masculinity" which "stands motionless, haughty, ashamed, with jaw set, while swords and spear-points beset the body." That was beautiful and ingenious; and it was exact, although it may have seemed to suggest too much passivity. For to be poised against fatality, to meet adverse conditions gracefully, is more than simple endurance; it is an act of aggression, a positive triumph—and the figure of Sebastian is the

most beautiful figure, if not of art as a whole, at least of the art of literature. Looking into this fictional world, one saw: a delicate self-mastery by which any inner deterioration, any biological decay was kept concealed from the eyes of the world; a crude, vicious sensuality capable of fanning its rising passions into pure flame, yes, even of mounting to dominance in the realm of beauty; a pallid weakness which draws from the glowing depths of the soul the strength to bow whole arrogant peoples before the foot of the cross, or before the feet of weakness itself; a charming manner maintained in his cold, strict service to form; a false, precarious mode of living, and the keenly enervating melancholy and artifice of the born deceiver—to observe such trials as this was enough to make one question whether there really was any heroism other than weakness. And in any case, what heroism could be more in keeping with the times? Gustav Aschenbach was the one poet among the many workers on the verge of exhaustion: all those over-burdened, used-up, tenacious moralists of production who, delicately built and destitute of means, can rely for a time at least on will-power and the shrewd husbandry of their resources to secure the effects of greatness. There are many such: they are the heroes of the period. And they all found themselves in his works; here they were indeed, upheld, intensified, applauded; they were grateful to him, they acclaimed him.

In his time he had been young and raw; and misled by his age he had blundered in public. He had stumbled, had exposed himself; both in writing and in talk he had offended against caution and tact. But he had acquired the dignity which, as he insisted, is the innate goad and craving of every great talent; in fact, it could be said that his entire development had been a conscious undeviating progression away from the embarrassments of scepticism and irony, and towards dignity.

The general masses are satisfied by vigour and tangibility of treatment rather than by any close intellectual processes; but youth, with its passion for the absolute, can be arrested only by the problematical. And Aschenbach had been absolute, problematical, as only a youth could be. He had been a slave to the intellect, had played havoc with knowledge, had ground up his seed crops, had divulged secrets, had discredited talent, had betrayed art—yes, while his modellings were entertaining the faithful votaries, filling them with enthusiasm, making their lives more keen, this youthful

artist was taking the breath away from the generation then in its twenties by his cynicisms on the questionable nature of art, and of artistry itself.

But it seems that nothing blunts the edge of a noble, robust mind more quickly and more thoroughly than the sharp and bitter corrosion of knowledge; and certainly the moody radicalism of the youth, no matter how conscientious, was shallow in comparison with his firm determination as an older man and a master to deny knowledge, to reject it, to pass it with raised head, in so far as it is capable of crippling, discouraging, or degrading to the slightest degree, our will, acts, feelings, or even passions. How else could the famous story of *The Wretch* be understood than as an outburst of repugnance against the disreputable psychologism of the times: embodied in the figure of that soft and stupid half-clown who pilfers a destiny for himself by guiding his wife (from powerlessness, from lasciviousness, from ethical frailty) into the arms of an adolescent, and believes that he may through profundity commit vileness? The verbal pressure with which he here cast out the outcast announced the return from every moral scepticism, from all fellow-feeling with the engulfed: it was the counter-move to the laxity of the sympathetic principle that to understand all is to forgive all—and the thing that was here well begun, even nearly completed, was that “miracle of reborn ingenuousness” which was taken up a little later in one of the author’s dialogues expressly and not without a certain discreet emphasis. Strange coincidences! Was it as a result of this rebirth, this new dignity and sternness, that his feeling for beauty—a discriminating purity, simplicity, and evenness of attack which henceforth gave his productions such an obvious, even such a deliberate stamp of mastery and classicism—showed an almost excessive strengthening about this time? But ethical resoluteness in the exclusion of science, of emancipatory and restrictive knowledge—does this not in turn signify a simplification, a reduction morally of the world to too limited terms, and thus also a strengthened capacity for the forbidden, the evil, the morally impossible? And does not form have two aspects? Is it not moral and unmoral at once—moral in that it is the result and expression of discipline, but unmoral, and even immoral, in that by nature it contains an indifference to morality, is calculated, in fact, to make morality bend beneath its proud and unencumbered sceptre?

Be that as it may. An evolution is a destiny; and why should

his evolution, which had been upheld by the general confidence of a vast public, not run through a different course from one accomplished outside the lustre and the entanglements of fame? Only chronic vagabondage will find it tedious and be inclined to scoff when a great talent outgrows the libertine chrysalis-stage, learns to seize upon and express the dignity of the mind, and superimposes a formal etiquette upon a solitude which had been filled with unchastened and rigidly isolated sufferings and struggles and had brought all this to a point of power and honour among men. Further, how much sport, defiance, indulgence there is in the self-formation of a talent! Gradually something official, didactic crept into Gustav Aschenbach's productions, his style in later life fought shy of any abruptness and boldness, any subtle and unexpected contrasts; he inclined towards the fixed and standardized, the conventionally elegant, the conservative, the formal, the formulated, nearly. And, as is traditionally said of Louis XIV, with the advancing years he came to omit every common word from his vocabulary. At about this time it happened that the educational authorities included selected pages by him in their prescribed school readers. This was deeply sympathetic to his nature, and he did not decline when a German prince who had just mounted to the throne raised the author of the *Frederick* to nobility on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday. After a few years of unrest, a few tentative stopping-places here and there, he soon chose Munich as his permanent home, and lived there in a state of middle-class respectability such as fits in with the life of the mind in certain individual instances. The marriage which, when still young, he had contracted with a girl of an educated family came to an end with her death after a short period of happiness. He was left with a daughter, now married. He had never had a son.

Gustav von Aschenbach was somewhat below average height, dark, and smooth-shaven. His head seemed a bit too large in comparison with his almost dapper figure. His hair was brushed straight back, thinning out towards the crown, but very full about the temples, and strongly marked with grey; it framed a high, ridged forehead. Gold spectacles with rimless lenses cut into the bridge of his bold, heavy nose. The mouth was big, sometimes drooping, sometimes suddenly pinched and firm. His cheeks were thin and wrinkled, his well-formed chin had a slight cleft. This head, usually bent patiently to one side, seemed to have gone

through momentous experiences, and yet it was his art which had produced those effects in his face, effects which are elsewhere the result of hard and agitated living. Behind this brow the brilliant repartee of the dialogue on war between Voltaire and the king had been born; these eyes, peering steadily and wearily from behind their glasses, had seen the bloody inferno of the lazaret in the Seven Years' War. Even as it applies to the individual, art is a heightened mode of existence. It gives deeper pleasures, it consumes more quickly. It carves into its servants' faces the marks of imaginary and spiritual adventures, and though their external activities may be as quiet as a cloister, it produces a lasting voluptuousness, over-refinement, fatigue, and curiosity of the nerves such as can barely result from a life filled with illicit passions and enjoyments.

III

Various matters of a literary and social nature delayed his departure until about two weeks after that walk in Munich. Finally he gave orders to have his country house ready for occupancy within a month; and one day between the middle and the end of May he took the night train for Trieste, where he made a stop-over of only twenty-four hours, and embarked the following morning for Pola.

What he was hunting was something foreign and unrelated to himself which would at the same time be quickly within reach; and so he stopped at an island in the Adriatic which had become well-known in recent years. It lay not far off the Istrian coast, with beautifully rugged cliffs fronting the open sea, and natives who dressed in variegated tatters and made strange sounds when they spoke. But rain and a heavy atmosphere, a provincial and exclusively Austrian patronage at the hotel, and the lack of that restfully intimate association with the sea which can be gotten only by a soft, sandy beach, irritated him, and prevented him from feeling that he had found the place he was looking for. Something within was disturbing him, and drawing him he was not sure where. He studied sailing dates, he looked about him questioningly, and of a sudden, as a thing both astounding and self-evident, his goal was before him. If you wanted to reach over night the unique, the fabulously different, where did you go? But that was plain. What was he doing here? He had lost the trail. He had wanted to go there. He did not delay in giving notice

of his mistake in stopping here. In the early morning mist, a week and a half after his arrival on the island, a fast motor-boat was carrying him and his luggage back over the water to the naval port, and he landed there just long enough to cross the gangplank to the damp deck of a ship which was lying under steam ready for the voyage to Venice.

It was an old hulk flying the Italian flag, decrepit, sooty, and mournful. In a cave-like, artificially lighted inside cabin where Aschenbach, immediately upon boarding the ship, was conducted by a dirty hunchbacked sailor who smirked politely, there was sitting behind a table, his hat cocked over his forehead and a cigarette stump in the corner of his mouth, a man with a goatee, and with the face of an old-style circus director, who was taking down the particulars of the passengers with professional grimaces and distributing the tickets. "To Venice!" he repeated Aschenbach's request, as he extended his arm and plunged his pen into the pasty dregs of a precariously tilted inkwell. "To Venice, first class! At your service, sir." And he wrote a generous scrawl, sprinkled it with blue sand out of a box, let the sand run off into a clay bowl, folded the paper with sallow, bony fingers, and began writing again. "A happily chosen destination!" he chatted on. "Ah, Venice! A splendid city! A city of irresistible attractiveness for the educated on account of its history as well as its present-day charms!" The smooth rapidity of his movements and the empty words accompanying them had something anaesthetic and reassuring about them, much as though he feared lest the traveller might still be vacillating in his decision to go to Venice. He handled the cash briskly, and let the change fall on the spotted table-cover with the skill of a croupier. "A pleasant journey, sir!" he said with a theatrical bow. "Gentlemen, I have the honour of serving you!" he called out immediately after, with his arm upraised, and he acted as if business were in full swing, although no one else was there to require his attention. Aschenbach returned to the deck.

With one arm on the railing, he watched the passengers on board and the idlers who loitered around the dock waiting for the ship to sail. The second class passengers, men and women, were huddled together on the foredeck, using boxes and bundles as seats. A group of young people made up the travellers on the first deck, clerks from Pola, it seemed, who had gathered in the greatest excitement for an excursion to Italy. They made a considerable fuss

about themselves and their enterprise, chattered, laughed, enjoyed their own antics self-contentedly, and, leaning over the hand-rails, shouted flippantly and mockingly at their comrades who, with portfolios under their arms, were going up and down the waterfront on business and kept threatening the picnickers with their canes. One, in a bright yellow summer suit of ultra-fashionable cut, with a red necktie, and a rakishly tilted panama, surpassed all the others in his crowing good humour. But as soon as Aschenbach looked at him a bit more carefully, he discovered with a kind of horror that the youth was a cheat. He was old, that was unquestionable. There were wrinkles around his eyes and mouth. The faint crimson of the cheeks was paint, the hair under his brilliantly decorated straw hat was a wig; his neck was hollow and stringy, his turned-up moustache and the imperial on his chin were dyed; the full set of yellow teeth which he displayed when he laughed, a cheap artificial plate; and his hands, with signet rings on both index fingers, were those of an old man. Fascinated with loathing, Aschenbach watched him in his intercourse with his friends. Did they not know, did they not observe that he was old, that he was not entitled to wear their bright, foppish clothing, that he was not entitled to play at being one of them? Unquestioningly, and as quite the usual thing, it seemed, they allowed him among them, treating him as one of their own kind and returning his jovial nudges in the ribs without repugnance. How could that be? Aschenbach laid his hand on his forehead and closed his eyes; they were hot, since he had had too little sleep. He felt as though everything were not quite the same as usual, as though some dream-like estrangement, some peculiar distortion of the world, were beginning to take possession of him, and perhaps this could be stopped if he hid his face for a time and then looked around him again. Yet at this moment he felt as though he were swimming; and looking up with an unreasoned fear, he discovered that the heavy, lugubrious body of the ship was separating slowly from the walled bank. Inch by inch, with the driving and reversing of the engine, the strip of dirty glistening water widened between the dock and the side of the ship; and after cumbersome manoeuvring, the steamer finally turned its nose towards the open sea. Aschenbach crossed to the starboard side, where the hunchback had set up a deck-chair for him, and a steward in a spotted dress-coat asked after his wants.

The sky was grey, the wind damp. Harbour and islands had

been left behind, and soon all land was lost in the haze. Flakes of coal dust, bloated with moisture, fell over the washed deck, which would not dry. After the first hour an awning was spread, since it had begun to rain.

Bundled up in his coat, a book in his lap, the traveller rested, and the hours passed unnoticed. It stopped raining; the canvas awning was removed. The horizon was unbroken. The sea, empty, like an enormous disk, lay stretched under the curve of the sky. But in empty inarticulate space our senses lose also the dimensions of time, and we slip into the incommensurate. As he rested, strange shadowy figures, the old dandy, the goatee from the inside cabin, passed through his mind, with vague gestures, muddled dream-words—and he was asleep.

About noon he was called to a meal down in the corridor-like dining-hall into which the doors opened from the sleeping-cabins; he ate near the head of a long table, at the other end of which the clerks including the old man had been drinking with the boisterous captain since ten o'clock. The food was poor, and he finished rapidly. He felt driven outside to look at the sky, to see if it showed signs of being brighter above Venice.

He had kept thinking that this had to occur, since the city had always received him in full blaze. But sky and sea remained dreary and leaden, at times a misty rain fell, and here he was reaching by water a different Venice than he had ever found when approaching on land. He stood by the forestays, looking in the distance, waiting for land. He thought of the heavy-hearted, enthusiastic poet for whom the domes and bell towers of his dreams had once risen out of these waters; he relived in silence some of that reverence, happiness, and sorrow which had been turned then into cautious song; and easily susceptible to sensations already moulded, he asked himself wearily and earnestly whether some new enchantment and distraction, some belated adventure of the emotions, might still be held in store for this idle traveller.

Then the flat coast emerged on the right; the sea was alive with fishing smacks; the bathers' island appeared; it dropped behind to the left, the steamer slowly entered the narrow port which is named after it; and on the lagoon, facing gay ramshackle houses, it stopped completely, since it had to wait for the barque of the health department.

An hour passed before it appeared. He had arrived, and yet he

had not; no one was in any hurry, no one was driven by impatience. The young men from Pola, patriotically attracted by the military bugle calls which rang over the water from the vicinity of the public gardens, had come on deck, and warmed by their Asti, they burst out with cheers for the drilling *bersagliere*. But it was repulsive to see what a state the primped-up old man had been brought to by his comradeship with youth. His old head was not able to resist its wine like the young and robust: he was painfully drunk. With glazed eyes, a cigarette between his trembling fingers, he stood in one place, swaying backwards and forwards from giddiness, and balancing himself laboriously. Since he would have fallen at the first step, he did not trust himself from the spot—yet he showed a deplorable insolence, buttonholed everyone who came near him, stammered, winked, and tittered, lifted his wrinkled, ornamented index finger in a stupid attempt at bantering, while he licked the corners of his mouth with his tongue in the most abominably suggestive manner. Aschenbach observed him darkly, and a feeling of numbness came over him again, as though the world were displaying a faint but irresistible tendency to distort itself into the peculiar and the grotesque: a feeling which circumstances prevented him from surrendering himself to completely, for just then the pounding activity of the engines commenced again, and the ship, resuming a voyage which had been interrupted so near its completion, passed through the San Marco canal.

So he saw it again, the most remarkable of landing places, that blinding composition of fantastic buildings which the Republic lays out before the eyes of approaching seafarers: the soft splendour of the palace, the Bridge of Sighs, on the bank the columns with lion and saint, the advancing, showy flank of the enchanted temple, the glimpse through to the archway, and the huge giant clock. And as he looked on he thought that to reach Venice by land, on the railroad, was like entering a palace from the rear, and that the most unreal of cities should not be approached except as he was now doing, by ship, over the high seas.

The engine stopped, gondolas pressed in, the gangway was let down, customs officials climbed on board and discharged their duties perfunctorily; the disembarking could begin. Aschenbach made it understood that he wanted a gondola to take him and his luggage to the dock of those little steamers which ply between the city and the Lido, since he intended to locate near the sea. His plans were

complied with, his wants were shouted down to the water, where the gondoliers were wrangling with one another in dialect. He was still hindered from descending; he was hindered by his trunk, which was being pulled and dragged with difficulty down the ladder-like steps. So that for some minutes he was not able to avoid the importunities of the atrocious old man, whose drunkenness gave him a sinister desire to do the foreigner parting honours. "We wish you a very agreeable visit," he bleated as he made an awkward bow. "We leave with pleasant recollections! *Au revoir, excusez,* and *bon jour*, your excellency!" His mouth watered, he pressed his eyes shut, he licked the corners of his mouth, and the dyed imperial turned up about his senile lips. "Our compliments," he mumbled, with two fingertips on his mouth, "our compliments to our sweetheart, the dearest prettiest sweetheart . . ." And suddenly his false upper teeth fell down on his lower lip. Aschenbach was able to escape. "To our sweetheart, our handsome sweetheart," he heard the cooing, hollow, stuttering voice behind him, while supporting himself against the handrail, he went down the gang-way.

Who would not have to suppress a fleeting shudder, a vague timidity and uneasiness, if it were a matter of boarding a Venetian gondola for the first time or after several years? The strange craft, an entirely unaltered survival from the times of balladry, with that peculiar blackness which is found elsewhere only in coffins—it suggests silent, criminal adventures in the rippling night, it suggests even more strongly death itself, the bier and the mournful funeral, and the last silent journey. And has it been observed that the seat of such a barque, this arm-chair of coffin-black veneer and dull black upholstery, is the softest, most luxuriant, most lulling seat in the world? Aschenbach noted this when he had relaxed at the feet of the gondolier, opposite his luggage, which lay neatly assembled on the prow. The rowers were still wrangling, harshly, incomprehensibly, with threatening gestures. But the strange silence of this canal city seemed to soften their voices, to dislodge them, and dissipate them over the water. It was warm here in the harbour. Touched faintly by the warm breeze of the sirocco, leaning back against the limber portions of the cushions, the traveller closed his eyes in the enjoyment of a lassitude which was as unusual with him as it was sweet. The trip would be short, he thought; if only it went on for ever! He felt himself glide with a gentle motion away from the crowd and the confusion of voices.

It became quieter and quieter around him! There was nothing to be heard but the splashing of the oar, the hollow slapping of the waves against the prow of the boat as it stood above the water black and bold and armed with its halberd-like tip, and a third sound, of speaking, of whispering—the whispering of the gondolier, who was talking to himself between his teeth, fitfully, in words that were pressed out by the exertion of his arms. Aschenbach looked up, and was slightly astonished to discover that the lagoon was widening, and he was headed for the open sea. This seemed to indicate that he ought not to rest too much, but should see to it that his wishes were carried out.

"To the steamer dock!" he repeated, turning around completely and looking into the face of the gondolier who stood behind on a raised platform and towered up between him and the dun-coloured sky. He was a man of unpleasant, even brutal, appearance, dressed in sailor blue, with a yellow sash; a formless straw hat, its weave partially unravelled, was tilted insolently on his head. The set of his face, the blond curly moustache beneath a curtly turned-up nose, undoubtedly meant that he was not Italian. Although of somewhat frail build, so that one would not have thought him especially well suited to his trade, he handled the oar with great energy, throwing his entire body into each stroke. Occasionally, he drew back his lips from the exertion, and disclosed his white teeth. Wrinkling his reddish brows, he gazed on past his passenger, as he answered deliberately, almost gruffly: "You are going to the Lido." Aschenbach replied: "Of course. But I have just taken the gondola to get me across to San Marco. I want to use the *vaporetto*."

"You cannot use the *vaporetto*, sir."

"And why not?"

"Because the *vaporetto* will not haul luggage."

That was so; Aschenbach remembered. He was silent. But the fellow's harsh, presumptuous manner, so unusual towards a foreigner here, seemed unbearable. He said: "That is my affair. Perhaps I want to put my things in storage. You will turn back."

There was silence. The oar splashed, the water thudded against the bow. And the talking and whispering began again. The gondolier was talking to himself between his teeth.

What was to be done? This man was strangely insolent, and had an uncanny decisiveness; the traveller, alone with him on the water, saw no way of getting what he wanted. And besides, how

softly he could rest, if only he did not become excited! Hadn't he wanted the trip to go on and on for ever? It was wisest to let things take their course, and the main thing was that he was comfortable. The poison of inertia seemed to be issuing from the seat, from this low, black-upholstered arm-chair, so gently cradled by the oar strokes of the imperious gondolier behind him. The notion that he had fallen into the hands of a criminal passed dreamily across Aschenbach's mind—without the ability to summon his thoughts to an active defence. The possibility that it was all simply a plan for cheating him seemed more abhorrent. A feeling of duty or pride, a kind of recollection that one should prevent such things, gave him the strength to arouse himself once more. He asked: "What are you asking for the trip?"

Looking down upon him, the gondolier answered: "You will pay."

It was plain how this should be answered. Aschenbach said mechanically: "I shall pay nothing, absolutely nothing, if you don't take me where I want to go."

"You want to go to the Lido."

"But not with you."

"I am rowing you well."

That is so, Aschenbach thought, and relaxed. That is so; you are rowing me well. Even if you do have designs on my cash, and send me down to Pluto with a blow of your oar from behind, you will have rowed me well.

But nothing like that happened. They were even joined by others: a boatload of musical brigands, men and women, who sang to guitar and mandolin, riding persistently side by side with the gondola and filling the silence over the water with their covetous foreign poetry. A hat was held out, and Aschenbach threw in money. Then they stopped singing, and rowed away. And again the muttering of the gondolier could be heard as he talked fitfully and jerkily to himself.

So they arrived, tossed in the wake of a steamer plying towards the city. Two municipal officers, their hands behind their backs, their faces turned in the direction of the lagoon, were walking back and forth on the bank. Aschenbach left the gondola at the dock, supported by that old man who is stationed with his grappling hook at each one of Venice's landing-places. And since he had no small money, he crossed over to the hotel by the steamer wharf to get

change and pay the rower what was due him. He got what he wanted in the lobby, he returned and found his travelling bags in a cart on the dock, and gondola and gondolier had vanished.

"He got out in a hurry," said the old man with the grappling hook. "A bad man, a man without a license, sir. He is the only gondolier who doesn't have a license. The others telephoned here."

Aschenbach shrugged his shoulders.

"The gentleman rode for nothing," the old man said, and held out his hat. Aschenbach tossed in a coin. He gave instructions to have his luggage taken to the beach hotel, and followed the cart through the avenue, the white-blossomed avenue which, lined on both sides with taverns, shops, and boarding houses, runs across the island to the shore.

He entered the spacious hotel from the rear, by the terraced garden, and passed through the vestibule and the lobby until he reached the desk. Since he had been announced, he was received with obliging promptness. A manager, a small frail flatteringly polite man with a black moustache and a French style frock coat, accompanied him to the third floor in the lift, and showed him his room, an agreeable place furnished in cherry wood. It was decorated with strong-smelling flowers, and its high windows afforded a view out across the open sea. He stepped up to one of them after the employee had left; and while his luggage was being brought up and placed in the room behind him, he looked down on the beach (it was comparatively deserted in the afternoon) and on the sunless ocean which was at flood tide and was sending long low waves against the bank in a calm regular rhythm.

The experiences of a man who lives alone and in silence are both vaguer and more penetrating than those of people in society; his thoughts are heavier, more odd, and touched always with melancholy. Images and observations which could easily be disposed of by a glance, a smile, an exchange of opinion, will occupy him unbearably, sink deep into the silence, become full of meaning, become life, adventure, emotion. Loneliness ripens the eccentric, the daringly and estrangingly beautiful, the poetic. But loneliness also ripens the perverse, the disproportionate, the absurd, and the illicit.—So, the things he had met with on the trip, the ugly old fop with his twaddle about sweethearts, the lawbreaking gondolier who was cheated of his pay, still left the traveller uneasy. Without really providing any resistance to the mind, without offering any solid

stuff to think over, they were nevertheless profoundly strange, as it seemed to him, and disturbing precisely because of this contradiction. In the meanwhile, he greeted the sea with his eyes, and felt pleasure at the knowledge that Venice was so conveniently near. Finally he turned away, bathed his face, left orders to the chambermaid for a few things he still needed done to make his comfort complete, and let himself be taken to the ground floor by the green-uniformed Swiss who operated the lift.

He took his tea on the terrace facing the ocean, then descended and followed the boardwalk for quite a way in the direction of the Hotel Excelsior. When he returned it seemed time to dress for dinner. He did this with his usual care and slowness, since he was accustomed to working over his toilette. And yet he came down a little early to the lobby where he found a great many of the hotel guests assembled, mixing distantly and with a show of mutual indifference to one another, but all waiting for meal time. He took a paper from the table, dropped into a leather chair, and observed the company; they differed agreeably from the guests where he had first stopped.

A wide and tolerantly inclusive horizon was spread out before him. Sounds of all the principal languages formed a subdued murmur. The accepted evening dress, a uniform of good manners, brought all human varieties into a fitting unity. There were Americans with their long wry features, large Russian families, English ladies, German children with French nurses. The Slavic element seemed to predominate. Polish was being spoken nearby.

It was a group of children gathered around a little wicker table, under the protection of a teacher or governess: three young girls, apparently fifteen to seventeen, and a long-haired boy about fourteen years old. With astonishment Aschenbach noted that the boy was absolutely beautiful. His face, pale and reserved, framed with honey-coloured hair, the straight sloping nose, the lovely mouth, the expression of sweet and god-like seriousness, recalled Greek sculpture of the noblest period; and the complete purity of the forms was accompanied by such a rare personal charm that, as he watched, he felt that he had never met with anything equally felicitous in nature or the plastic arts. He was further struck by the obviously intentional contrast with the principles of upbringing which showed in the sisters' attire and bearing. The three girls, the eldest of whom could be considered grown up, were dressed

with a chasteness and severity bordering on disfigurement. Uniformly cloister-like costumes, of medium length, slate-coloured, sober, and deliberately unbecoming in cut, with white turned-down collars as the only relief, suppressed every possible appeal of shapeliness. Their hair, brushed down flat and tight against the head, gave their faces a nun-like emptiness and lack of character. Surely this was a mother's influence, and it had not even occurred to her to apply the pedagogical strictness to the boy which she seemed to find necessary for her girls. It was clear that in his existence the first factors were gentleness and tenderness. The shears had been resolutely kept from his beautiful hair; like a Prince Charming's, it fell in curls over his forehead, his ears, and still deeper, across his neck. The English sailor suit, with its braids, stitchings, and embroideries, its puffy sleeves narrowing at the ends and fitting snugly about the fine wrists of his still childish but slender hands, gave the delicate figure something rich and luxurious. He was sitting, half profile to the observer, one foot in its black patent-leather shoe placed before the other, an elbow resting on the arm of his wicker chair, a cheek pressed against his fist, in a position of negligent good manners, entirely free of the almost subservient stiffness to which his sisters seemed accustomed. Did he have some illness? For his skin stood out as white as ivory against the golden darkness of the surrounding curls. Or was he simply a pampered favourite child, made this way by a doting and moody love? Aschenbach inclined to believe the latter. Almost every artist is born with a rich and treacherous tendency to recognize injustices which have created beauty, and to meet aristocratic distinction with sympathy and reverence.

A waiter passed through and announced in English that the meal was ready. Gradually the guests disappeared through the glass door into the dining hall. Stragglers crossed, coming from the entrance, or the lifts. Inside, they had already begun serving, but the young Poles were still waiting around the little wicker table; and Aschenbach, comfortably propped in his deep chair, and with this beauty before his eyes, stayed with them.

The governess, a small corpulent middle-class woman with a red face, finally gave the sign to rise. With lifted brows, she pushed back her chair and bowed, as a large woman dressed in grey and richly jewelled with pearls entered the lobby. This woman was advancing with coolness and precision; her lightly

powdered hair and the lines of her dress were arranged with the simplicity which always signifies taste in those quarters where devoutness is taken as one element of dignity. She might have been the wife of some high German official. Except that her jewellery added something fantastically lavish to her appearance; indeed, it was almost priceless, and consisted of ear pendants and a very long triple chain of softly glowing pearls, as large as cherries.

The children had risen promptly. They bent over to kiss the hand of their mother who, with a distant smile on her well preserved though somewhat tired and peaked features, looked over their heads and directed a few words to the governess in French. Then she walked to the glass door. The children followed her: the girls in the order of their age, after them the governess, the boy last. For some reason or other he turned around before crossing the sill, and since no one else was in the lobby his strange dusky eyes met those of Aschenbach who, his newspaper on his knees, lost in thought, was gazing after the group.

What he saw had not been unusual in the slightest detail. They had not preceded the mother to the table; they had waited, greeted her with respect, and observed the customary forms on entering the room. But it had taken place so pointedly, with such an accent of training, duty, and self-respect, that Aschenbach felt peculiarly touched by it all. He delayed for a few moments, then he too crossed into the dining-room, and was assigned to his table, which, as he noted with a brief touch of regret, was very far removed from that of the Polish family.

Weary, and yet intellectually active, he entertained himself during the lengthy meal with abstract, or even transcendental things; he thought over the secret union which the lawful must enter upon with the individual for human beauty to result, from this he passed into general problems of form and art, and at the end he found that his thoughts and discoveries were like the seemingly felicitous promptings of a dream which, when the mind is sobered, are seen to be completely empty and unfit. After the meal, smoking, sitting, taking an occasional turn in the park with its smell of nightfall, he went to bed early and spent the night in a sleep deep and unbroken, but often enlivened with the apparitions of dreams.

To be continued

PSYCHOLOGY AND COMMON SENSE

BY THOMAS CRAVEN

THE mild, academic carping of Mr Laurence Buermeyer is not the first cry of distress provoked by my writings. Whenever a new philosophy of expression is published, a definite, practicable system based upon the fundamental factors of creative activity and a true intimacy with the media of art, the laboratory specialists "accustomed to giving Binet-Simon tests to young children," and the amateur aesthetes of French cafés come forward with grumbling complaints against exclusive standards. It is not without significance that the "popular fallacies" trumped up by the professor should so closely resemble the objections levelled at me last summer by a Polish critic residing in Paris—special pleading is the same the world over; and recent converts to the modernist cause, appalled at the asperity of my methods, have attacked my philosophy on the ground of its incompleteness. If I have wounded the sensibilities of young enthusiasts, it is because I cannot, in the name of common sense, accept every eccentricity parading under the banners of the new movement, and because I have stood consistently for dignity and decency in art as opposed to shallowness, ancient or contemporary, sincere or malevolent.

Mr Buermeyer's attitude typifies the confusion of the man who takes his modernism without reserve. He is an excellent general psychologist, but in matters pertaining to art deficient in experience. I should deal gently with him but for the indirect manner of his assault. His elaborate parallel between myself and Mr Roger Fry is nonsense, pure and simple; and his attempt to discredit my aesthetics by attributing it originally to Mr Fry, and then verbosely arraigning the Englishman is a piece of Chinese injustice that I cannot lightly pass over. It was I, and not Mr Buermeyer, who first discovered the weaknesses of Mr Fry's theories. More than two years ago in the pages of *THE DIAL* I pierced the vulnerable passages of Vision and Design, and voiced my own opinions on the indivisibility of form and content, the true teleology of art, the absurdity of non-representative form, and the uselessness of "pure

plasticity." And now comes the professor lamely reiterating my own arguments! He bewails my failure to "acknowledge obligation to Mr Fry." Of course not! I might with equal impertinence ask Mr Fry to express his indebtedness to me. "The most significant point of resemblance between them" (myself and the British critic) writes Mr Buermeyer, is "their common insistence on constructiveness, i.e., avoidance of close reproduction from nature." The idea that art is not imitation is as old as the hills; it is one of the cardinal tenets in every valid aesthetic; it is the common property of all intelligent men; and it has appeared in one form or another in the history of the beautiful from the scattered notes of Leonardo da Vinci to the logical expositions of Croce.

Now to business. I shall leave Mr Fry to his own defence, and reply only to those points relating to my thesis. According to Mr Buermeyer, my explanation of form is seriously inexact; it seems that I have arbitrarily construed the term to serve my own ends, and that my conception is limited and exclusive. A safe criticism, certainly, and one that might be urged against every pragmatic rationale. I cheerfully admit that form, universally considered, is the result of any process which unifies and orders the idle and gross materials of life. For a general aesthetic, non-historical and non-practical, such a definition is adequate; but for a precise inquiry into the constructive aspects of art it is too vague and hypothetical to carry any meaning; it arises from an abstract world totally dissociated from the tangible problems involved in creative forces; it lifts irrelevant and insignificant actions into the sphere of the beautiful, and fails even to touch the inwardness of creative labour. Like most psychological and philosophical theories, in attempting to embrace everything it grasps nothing. For practical purposes the word form must be treated in much the same fashion as the word value—it is not only a desiderate, but a term with a technical connotation. In order to differentiate, let us say, between a Sisley and a Cézanne, I have designated form as a sculptural conception. I gave to a baffling and cryptic expression the concrete meaning of the studio, and showed its function in the development of realism. I was thus able to separate the sculptural elements of painting from other constituents such as pattern and line, colour and tone.

My two articles were carefully entitled *The Progress of Painting*; and I made it perfectly clear that my purpose was to analyse the

nature and evolution of the predominant tendencies of art. Mr Buermeyer is right in declaring that injustice was done to many painters; but he must not forget that in compressing the history of so vast a subject into a few pages I was forced to sacrifice distinguished individual talent. Renoir is a case in point. No one doubts Renoir's importance as an artist; but as a force operating on other creative minds he has not been so influential as Cézanne, or, for that matter, as Matisse, Picasso, and a number of lesser figures. Considered as an object, a painting by Renoir is a thing of superlative beauty; but as a constructive tendency his work has not opened new vistas. In fact, Renoir's effect on his followers has invariably been disastrous, mainly because, like Mr Buermeyer himself, they have mistaken his surfaces for his compositional affiliations. Contrasted with Cézanne, Renoir owes little to the Italian Renaissance—save in the modelling of his surfaces, which are sculptural to the extent of the bas-relief, his major interests were in colour and tone, and a decorative line. His pictures are patterns similar in composition to the canvases of Watteau; the lines have their origin in masses of juxtaposed tone, exquisite in colour, but wanting in structural depth.

In connecting Cézanne with the Renaissance I was at pains to emphasize the spiritual identity of the old and the new art; it is fortunate, however, that Mr Buermeyer has dwelt on the technics of the issue—it gives me an opportunity to expose his meagre knowledge of processes. The Italian masters, instigated by Giotto, conceived their paintings as sculptural extensions; and Cézanne, ambitious to achieve equivalent results with an Impressionistic palette, studied their methods profoundly. He proved conclusively that a sculptural form may be realized by organized planes as well as by continuous modelling; and this truth has stimulated a host of diversified modern temperaments into new fields of endeavour. Renoir stands between Cézanne on the one hand, and Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Matisse on the other. I submit this as a general statement—there are a few deep Renoirs and some relatively flat Cézannes. To Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Matisse, painting was an elaboration of pattern; to Cézanne it was an extension of planes derived from his efforts to increase the palpability and depth of the Renaissance masterpieces.

The difference between these two points of view must be taken

into account before we can arrive at the significant facts of painting as a progressive activity. For this reason I discarded the abstract definition of form, and gave the word an objective and practical meaning. Whereupon Mr Buermeyer argues that I have confused form with solidity and organization in three dimensions. The "confusion" was intentional—it enabled me to give my thesis precision, and to discriminate accurately between the various types of construction. The duality involved in my interpretation can be escaped by substituting *pattern* for two-dimensional form, and *order* for all unifying activity.

Composing in two dimensions, the artist employs either lines or areas of tone and colour. Having established his boundaries or his tonal spaces, he proceeds, as in the case of Renoir, to build up his masses by sculptural modelling. The analogue is the bas-relief. Most painting is of this character—the imposition of solidity upon a flat pattern. In a true tri-dimensional structure the process from the beginning must be of a more tactful character, and the design must be the result of volumes (as distinguished from masses) placed in harmonious recession. How an order of this kind enhances the emotional appeal of pictures I have already explained. The ability to conceive such an order is exceedingly rare: Cézanne, of all the modernists, approximated it; and his achievements in this direction, together with the imaginative content of his art, affiliate him definitively with the Renaissance. Renoir, for the most part, constructed his pictures on a pattern basis, a basis of highly saturated tones and naturalistic values; but to counteract literalism and to relieve his objects, he manipulated his lights to his own ends, placing them where they were needed to accentuate mass, and not where they naturally fell. The consequent rotundity of his nudes has led superficial critics to couple him, rather than Cézanne, with the Renaissance. If the observer will take the trouble to compare these two painters in canvases revealing a complexity of figures and objects, he can readily see that compositionally, and therefore fundamentally, it was Cézanne who carried on the classical tradition and restored its prestige.

Mr Buermeyer has missed altogether my construction of the term line, or contour. I used the word as currently defined by painters. Line specifies the general movement of mass or volume, or a series of such—an arm, torso, a number of figures, objects, or

planes functioning in a design. It is an indication of direction; and my phrase "the clean line or contour," does not refer to the single stroke of the draughtsman, but to any unbroken form or sequence of forms. Hence it follows that the expression is applicable to Renoir and not to the Cubists.

As concerns my "formula," let me say to Mr Buermeyer that it is most elastic. In any case it springs from direct recognition of the facts of painting, and not from the exigencies of an all-enveloping verbal aesthetic. Art is not only an expression of experience and desire, but as I have said time and again, a problem of relationships. It may be offensive to the theorist to speak of the puzzling trials attending the consolidation of imaginative material as *problems*—most frequently the solutions are discovered by flashes of insight—but problems they are nevertheless, demanding reason and reflection. A motif, whether experienced or imagined, is never externalized artistically in the full character of its primary conception. Once design enters, every form or shape realized on the canvas alters the nature and character of the original stimulus. It is undeniable that lines, masses, and forms have a life of their own which is nearly always at variance with natural appearances. Art embodies then, not only a reflection of psycho-physical experiences as summarized in the first section of my articles, but a highly complex constructiveness with unique characteristics. From these characteristics many combinations have been gleaned, and codified in terms of formulae; the procedure is similar to the laws of colour mixtures wherein, for instance, certain proportions of two colours are known to produce a third. In composition and arrangement such laws are indispensable—they are part and parcel of the painter's equipment; for example, diverging lines must be supported by opposites to insure balance. The artist applies these equilibrating devices almost unconsciously, at least after his initial experiences, but all the same the formulae are constructive realities, and occupy a most important position in the growth of a picture from the experienced raw material to the completed aesthetic fact—perhaps the most important, after the first emotional step has been taken.

Painting unfailingly runs to formula in more than one sense. The strawberry reds shading into blue-greens and deep earth-colours of Renoir's later pieces supply us with an excellent manifestation of colour-formulae; and his practice of focusing his lights

on the "bumps" of his forms represents his use of a sculptural formula, an expedient to gain relief. Here the synthetic processes are the outcome of compositional experience and are perfectly legitimate. That correct geometrical perspective is destructive to rhythm is a commonplace, but as a standard of judgement it has become a formula, a rule of thumb which, like many others, is kept in mind by all modern painters. A tri-dimensional conception includes the whole technique of a pattern with the added virtue of voluminous space. In plain language it opens the flat doors of decoration and plunges us into the profound and moving realism of immense depths. It is for this reason that I have stressed the constructive superiority of recessive painting—it offers a greater field for the artist. To declare it the only valid form of artistic expression is frankly absurd—I made that clear enough—but it remains the most comprehensive. Since writing my survey in *THE DIAL* I have seen a set of Chinese paintings which have confirmed my belief that it was not only in the Occident that the masters of art recognized and strove for the third dimension.

With due respect to Sisley and Pissarro, I stand unequivocally against Impressionism. The school brought forth inimitable daintiness of surface, but its contributions to design are negligible. Where indeed are the Impressionists of yesteryear, and what have they bequeathed the world? The innumerable apostles of spectrum scales have already passed into oblivion; and their glamorous formula, sunlight and stupidity, is too transparent to capture the youngest students of to-day. The effect of the movement on subsequent painters has been confined exclusively to colour; but the high-keyed palette is obsolescent, and painters throughout the world, having renewed their interest in design and having realized the need for deep blacks and sombre earth-colours as a foil to the brilliant tints, have swept aside Monet's iridescent halos.

Another item: Mr Buermeyer's ideas of naturalism are beside the issue. Naturalism may hold ascendancy in the philosophic world, but it is of small importance in the life of the constructive modernist. The term, as pertinent to painting, disagrees with philosophic usage. The fact that a painter like Utrillo or Marin selects a homely subject, a "natural" subject, by no means implies that he presents his material by naturalistic devices. This method reduces the painter to a slavish duplication of appearances, binds him to

literal values, and allows for little freedom in design. Naturalism reached its artistic height in the works of Memling, Hals, and Velasquez; it survives to-day among the fashionable portraitists, and the more academic landscape painters; and the sum total of its expressive means is a nice transcript of flesh-tones, faithful rendering of values, and the sheen of textures.

To wind up this long reply I must remind Mr Buermeyer that he approaches art in the conventional attitude of the dealer and the curator; to him the whole significance of painting is restricted to the precious object. He worships the picture, the glorious possession; he would have art a finished and indefectible treasure, a perfect chrysolite. To those who have adopted this attitude any thesis damaging in the slightest degree to the worth of canvases, either owned or coveted, is anathema. Personally I am in sympathy with the artists; they at least esteem the object as valuable only when it serves as a stimulus to further creative effort. When a painter has exhausted a picture; that is to say, when it no longer affords him constructive assistance, he is ready to hang the work in a museum, or if sufficiently indifferent to its appeal to other artists, to push his foot through it. I have considered art as an unending activity revealing itself in a progressive interplay of tendencies, an attitude decidedly hostile to the best academic theory of aesthetics. The academic advocate in the last analysis seems to be only the guardian of special interests; I have viewed painting as a living issue, and have discarded that part of the past which has nothing to offer present needs. The connoisseur and the creator have always been at odds.

In emphasizing the Renaissance I have been guilty of nothing more than plain justice; the old Italian art has always afforded the widest suggestive field, and it still endures as the soundest foundation for aesthetic preparation both technical and spiritual. In no instance have I judged painting by Renaissance standards—I have simply aligned structural tendencies with their actual origins.



Permission of Alfred Steiglitz

BEFORE THE WIND: MAINE. BY JOHN MARIN





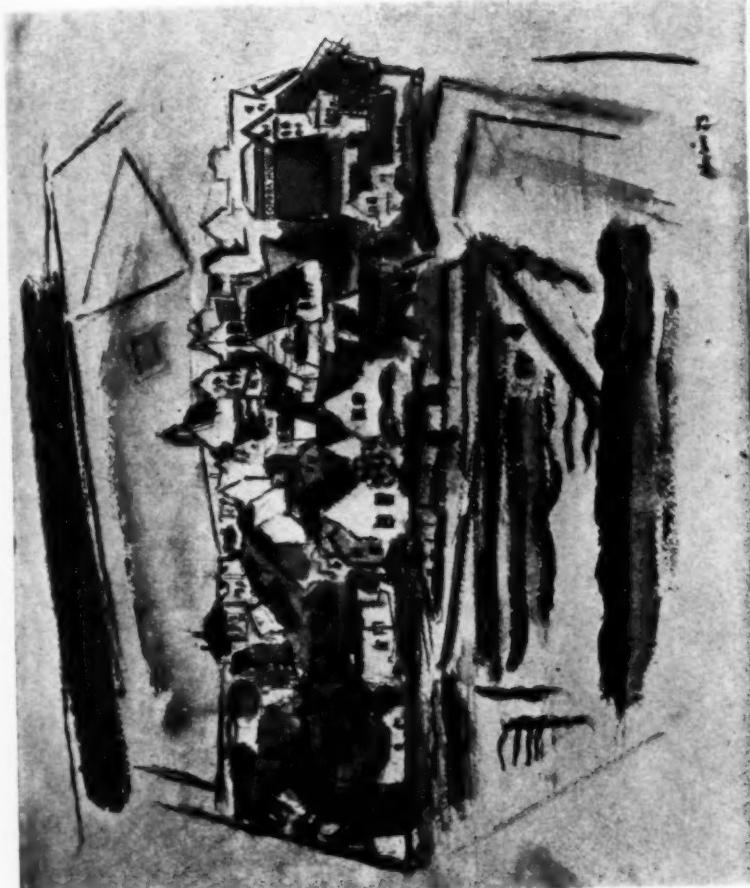
Permission of Alfred Stieglitz

TREES, ROCKS, SEA : MAINE. BY JOHN MARIN



Permission of Alfred Stieglitz

A TOWN ON THE MAINE COAST. BY JOHN MARIN



F
of the
the k
gives
of the
Esai
“crea
to fin
that
howe
bald
not l
or Pr
spirit
mere
Mill
His
was c
of E
pure
sure
in hi

lost
wrot

It

¹ Cr
lat
Co

² Or

A MOTLEY PANTHEON

BY BERTRAND RUSSELL

FORTY years ago, there was a parlour game which the old were fond of inflicting on the young. It consisted of making a list of the ten greatest men, or the six greatest soldiers, or something of the kind. In *Creative Spirits of the Nineteenth Century*,¹ Brandes gives us what one must suppose is his list of the twelve greatest men of that century. No doubt my readers know all about Paul Heyse, Esaias Tegnér, and Frederick Paludan-Müller, who are three of his "creative spirits." I must confess that I did not, and was surprised to find them in the catalogue, though I have no reason to suppose that they do not deserve their place. There are others in the list, however, against whom I feel more positive—for instance, Garibaldi. No doubt Italian unity was important; without it, we should not have had Fascismo and Mussolini, or d'Annunzio and Fiume, or President Wilson's surrender about Shantung.² But the "creative spirit" of Italian unity was Mazzini, not Garibaldi; Garibaldi merely translated Mazzini's thoughts into drama. John Stuart Mill, another of the chosen Twelve, can hardly be called creative. His ideas came from his father and Bentham. Bentham certainly was one of the creative spirits of the Nineteenth Century; fifty years of English politics consisted in carrying out his ideas. Even in the purely literary field, where Brandes might be expected to have a surer touch, he is surprising. Apart from Mill, the only Englishman in his list is Swinburne, by whose death (he says):

"The English-speaking world, one of the largest groups on earth, lost its greatest lyric poet; in fact, the greatest lyric poet that ever wrote the English tongue, when skill and virtuosity are considered."

It is proverbially difficult to judge of poetry in a foreign lan-

¹ *Creative Spirits of the Nineteenth Century*. By Georg Brandes. Translated by Rasmus B. Anderson. 8vo. 478 pages. Thomas Y. Crowell Company. \$3.00.

² On this subject, see Lansing.

guage, in which obvious rhythms are more easily appreciated than subtler melodies; but even so, such a judgement shakes one's confidence in a critic. "Sabrina fair," for example, has "skill and virtuosity" far beyond the compass of Swinburne—not to mention thousands of other instances which swarm into one's mind. There is, however, one interesting fact in the essay on Swinburne, namely that, in the house of Karl Blind:

"Swinburne, soon after the publication of 'Poems and Ballads,' met for the first time Giuseppe Mazzini, who exacted from him a promise not to write any more erotic verse, but to dedicate his muse to the cause of liberty."

As long as he was allowed to drink to excess, he kept this promise; but when Watts-Dunton had made him sober, he took to praising British imperialism and attacking the Boers. Moralists have much to answer for.

The first essay in the volume was written in 1869, the last in 1915. This period is so long that little unity can be expected. The last essay is on Napoleon, and is written under the influence of the war. There is nothing in it that throws any new light on the subject, and one cannot help wondering why it was written. There are interesting facts about Napoleon: that Josephine's poodle bit him in the calf on their wedding-night as he was getting into bed; that he lost Genoa because the funds for its relief had been diverted by the War Minister to the payment of Josephine's milliner; that after the divorce he wrote to Josephine demanding that she should sympathize with his loneliness—and so on and so on. But the full-dress historical facts have lost their power to interest us, through familiarity; moreover the trail of rhetoric is over them all, in spite of the accident that they really happened. Psychologically, Napoleon is worthy of study because of the contrast between his amazing intelligence and his commonplace and vulgar temperament. Alexander and Caesar could say things worthy of great conquerors; Napoleon could never rise above bombast. But Brandes, for some reason, admires him, and attempts to defend him against the usual charges.

The most interesting essay in the book is the one on Ibsen. We are given to understand that from the Reformation till 1870 Scan-

dinavia slumbered—so much so that when Björnsen wrote an early play about Mary Stuart he was obliged, in deference to Protestant orthodoxy, to give John Knox the most honourable rôle. Ibsen disliked the society of a small Norwegian town, wrote satires on it, and so was accused of immorality. Consequently he fled to the South, and in the Neapolitan sun found strength to write about northern gloom. Brandes makes much of his misanthropy, and suggests that he took up the cause of Woman partly from hatred of Man.

"He did not originally possess a large amount of sympathy for woman. There are authors who have a peculiar affinity for women, who have, indeed, a decided feminine element in their own natures. Ibsen does not belong to this class. I am quite confident he takes far more pleasure in conversation with men than with women, and he has certainly passed much less time in the society of women than is the wont of poets."

A cynic might suggest that this accounts for his being still able, in middle age, to idealize Woman; but far be it from us to subscribe to such a notion. Much of his work—notably *The Master Builder*—was still unwritten at the time of Brandes' essay (1883); probably a good deal would have had to be modified if the essay had been brought up to date.

I have said nothing of the essays on Renan and Flaubert. They say the usual things pleasantly, but add little to our understanding of their subjects. It is a mark of the one-sidedness of what passes as "culture" that such a book can be written without the inclusion of a single man of science. When one views the Nineteenth Century in perspective, it is clear that science is its only claim to distinction. Its literary men were mostly second-rate, its philosophers sentimental, its artists inferior to those of earlier times. Science ruthlessly forced novelties upon it, while men of "culture" tried to preserve the old picturesque follies by wrapping them in a mist of muddled romanticism. Until "culture" has made its peace with science, it will remain outside the main current of events, feeble and querulous, sighing for the past. The world that science has been making may be disgusting, but it is the world in which we have to live; and it condemns to futility all who are too fastidious to notice it.

JOHN OF BELGRADE

BY LEONARD DOUGHTY

*Out of the rout of the gay bon-ton
With my taste macaber I choose John.*

John of Belgrade died last night,
They found him dead by candle light.

It was little John got of this world's good;
Squalid lodging and bitter food:

All men's scorn, and women's hate,
And jeering of children that passed his gate.

He crept to his kennel last night to die,
And lit the candle they found him by.

Limp in his rags with the death-froth smeared
Over the yellow mat of his beard.

The rigour had not yet struck him stark
When they huddled him into the shallow dark

Of a little grave digged into the bones
Of an elder generation of Johns.

They shut the hut on his loathèd name,
And went their ways, and all was the same.

Only I know they found a book
Hid in a little vermined nook

Dug in the foul hut's crazy blocks;
'Twas the *Hürnen Seyfried* of old Hans Sachs.

Spotted and sprouted with fungi-tints,
And the print was bleared with his finger-prints,

And other blotches, dabbled and dim,
That were not fungi, but tears of him.

And I halfway heard or seemed to hear
A laughter that chuckled between each tear.

That night at the palace the Emperor's rout
Was gay as day, till the stars went out.

And then it was day and John was dead,
And the Emperor alive with his crown on his head.

Much had died at the rout that night,
As far as such things die outright.

A woman died that I know was there,
Though she walked next day with a rose in her hair.

And the king's best friend who was next to the throne,
Died the very same hour as John.
(Though it was not known till the war came on!)

What died that night 'mid the palace-host
Were the things that John had never lost.

And what lived on, John never found,
Unless he got them underground.

So on his brow in lieu of this
I lean and lay a poet-kiss.

('Tis my love of John and my hate of the labour,
And not the theme makes my verse macaber.)

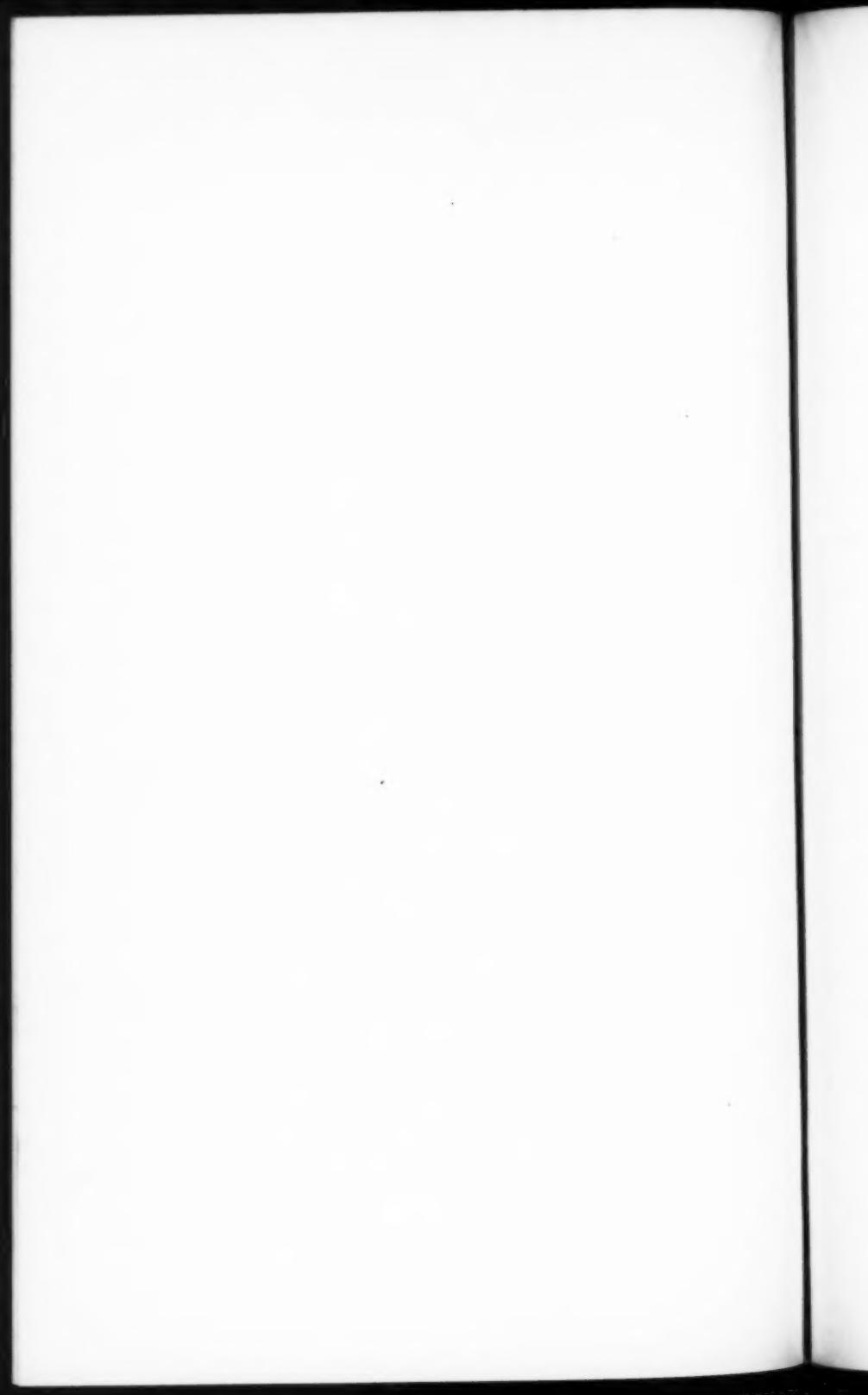
I think there are many shall love me yet
In the years when I too shall forget.—

As these forget! 'tis a bitter bond
That binds me still to the demi-monde.

But though love's a mood that's off and on,
Be at rest: I shall always love you, John.



CHARLES SPENCER CHAPLIN. BY E. E. CUMMINGS



IN A DANCE

BY JESSICA NELSON NORTH

That you have come to see
Under all things the flesh—
What does it prove?
Fabric and shining knee
Still intermesh,
And no less slenderly fresh
The dancers move.

This much at least is true
In a world of spurious wonder,
Flesh lying under
Texture and form and hue,
Wallows—and sings—and dies—
And after all beautiful things
Disconsolately cries.

Wrapped in the web of the loom
For a while it shines and rejoices,
But at length inclines to the voices
Of the inner room.

Things we see in a dance
Seem momentous and sweet—
Shoulders gleam, and feet
Rhythmic retreat and advance.

THE SORROWS OF AVICENNA

A Dialogue in Limbo

BY G. SANTAYANA

THE SPIRIT OF AVICENNA: Great is Allah: even I, alas, could not deceive him. By every promise of faith and canon of the law, I should now find myself in The Paradise of the Prophet, reclining on silken cushions and sipping delicious sherbets; the fresh sweet sound of bubbling fountains should comfort me; I should be soothed by the scent of great sleeping flowers, their petals like amethysts and rubies and sapphires and liquid opals. I should be charmed by the sight of peacocks spreading their fans; and the nightingales in the thicket of ilex should sing to me like my own heart. Some tender young maid, wide-eyed and nimble as a gazelle, should be not far from me; her hair should be lightly touching my cheek; my hand should be wandering over her bosom. From the impregnable safety of my happiness I should be looking abroad through all the heavens and surveying the earth; the maxims of the wise should be on my lips and in my soul the joy of understanding. Walking upon the bastions of Paradise, my arm linked in that of a friend, of him that my soul trusts utterly, I should be repeating the words of the poets, and he in answer, without haste or error, should be composing for me tenderer and more beautiful verses of his own; and we should be marvelling and sighing together at the ineffable greatness of God and the teeming splendour of the earth. Yes, legally, I should have been saved. Was I not exactitude itself in every religious duty? Did I ever allow myself the least licence, on the ground that I was a philosopher, unless I had a text to justify me? Did I blasphemously lay my assurance of salvation in my own merits or in the letter of the law, rather than in the complacency of the Compassionate and the Merciful One, who having made us can forgive and understand? Ah, if ever Allah could be deceived, certainly I should have deceived him. But the Omniscient looked into my secret heart, and perceived that I was no believer, and that whilst my lips invoked his name and that of the Prophet,

my trust was all in Aristotle and in myself. Sharpening therefore in silence the sword of his wrath, he overruled my legal rights by a higher exercise of equity and reduced me, as you see, to themiserable condition of a pure spirit. Here among heathen ghosts I pine and loiter eternally, a shadow reflecting life and no longer living, vainly revolving my thoughts, because in my thoughts I trusted, and missing all the warm and solid pleasures of Paradise, because I had hoped to win them without blinding my intellect, or suffering old fables to delude me.

THE SPIRIT OF A STRANGER STILL LIVING ON EARTH: Is it not some consolation to consider that if you were not able to deceive Allah, Allah was not able to deceive you?

AVICENNA: Small consolation. Pride of intellect is the sour refuge of those who have nothing else to be proud of. Strong as my soul was in other virtues, and generous my blood, intellect prevailed too much in me, dashed my respect for my vital powers, and killed the confidence they should have bred; it overcame the illusions necessary to a creature, and caused me to see all things too much as God sees them.

THE STRANGER: A rare fault in a philosopher.

AVICENNA: May Allah impute it to me for humility and not for blasphemy, but I never wished to resemble him. Yes, I know what you are about to say. The divine part in us, though small, is the most precious, and we should live as far as we may in the eternal. Far be it from me to deny that, or any other maxim of Aristotle; especially now, when that exiguous element in myself is all that is left of me. But, frankly, I pine for the rest. Are not even the souls of your friends the Christians, wretchedly as they are accustomed to live, waiting now in their forlorn heaven for the last day, when they shall return to their bodies, and feel again that they are men and not angels? Intellect, being divine, comes into our tents through the door; it is a guest and a stranger to our blood. Its language is foreign to us, and painfully as we may try to learn it, we always speak it ill. How often have I laughed at Arabs pluming themselves in Persian, and at Persians blasphemously corrupting the syllables of the Koran which they thought to recite; for few, like me, are perfect masters of both tongues. And do you suppose Allah does not smile at our rustic accent when we venture to think? But there are other tricks of ours which he does not

laugh at, because he cannot imitate them. May we not pride ourselves a little on our illusions, on our sports, on our surprises, and on our childish laughter, so much fresher and sweeter than his solemnity? Rather than be eternal, who would not choose to be young? Do not the Pagans and Christians (who have never understood the greatness of Allah) confess as much, when in their fables they relate how the gods have become men for a season, shepherds, lovers of women, wanderers, even wonder-workers and beggars; or how they have prayed, fasted, wept, and died? Of course, such tales are impious; Allah can never be deceived or diminished; and to live in time, to dwell in a body, to thirst, to love, and to grieve are forms of impotence and self-deception. If we knew all, we could not live. But it is precisely this sweet cajolery, this vivid and terrible blindness of life, which Allah cannot share, in which his creatures shine. In order to know the truth, Allah alone sufficed; he did not create us to supplement his intelligence. He created us rather that by our incorrigible ignorance we might diversify existence and surround his godhead with beings able to die and to kill, able to dream, able to look for the truth and to tell themselves lies, able above all to love, to feel the life quickened suddenly within them at the sight of some other lovely and winsome creature, until they could contain it no longer, and too great, too mad, too sweet to be endured it should leap from them into that other being, there to create a third. If this madness was not worth having, as well as intellect, why did Allah create the world? Ah, he was solitary, he was cold, he shone like the stars in the wilderness on a frosty night; and when he bethought himself of his coldness and shuddered at his solitude, that pang of itself begat the companion with which his Oneness was pregnant, the Soul of the World; in order that the Intellect itself might grow warm in the eyes of the Soul that loved it, and be the star of her dark voyage, and that his solitude might turn to glory, because of the Life that flowed from him into the bosom of that loneliness and quickened it to all forms of love. Now this divine Soul of the World had in turn flowed into my soul more copiously than into that of other mortals. I had health, riches, arts, rare adventures, fame, and the choicest pleasures of both body and mind; but happiness I never had. So long as I still lived, sailing before the wind of my prosperity, I hardly perceived the division and misery of my being, or

fancied that with my next triumph they would cease; but now I perceive them. I might have been happy, if I had not been a philosopher, or if I had been nothing else. As it was, too much intellect made brackish the sweet and impetuous current of my days. Philosophy in me was not a harmony of my whole nature, but one of its passions, and the most inordinate, because I craved and struggled to know everything; and this passion in me availed only to mock and embitter the others, without subduing them. I renounced nothing, I rejected nothing; being but a man, I lived like a god, and my pride blasted my human nature. All actions worked themselves out in me without illusion, in the ghastly light of truth and of foreknowledge. Horror was never far from my pleasures. The fever of my ambitions must needs be perpetually accelerated, lest the too clear intellect in me should look upon them and they should die. I scorned the modesty of the sages who made of intelligence a second and a sundered life; and as for lack of faith I missed the Paradise of the Prophet, even so, for lack of measure and renunciation, I missed the peace of the philosopher. I was wedded to existence as to a favourite wife, whom I knew to be faithless, but could not cease to love. Before the flight of time, before death, before Allah, I clasped my hands and wept and prayed, like a woman before her dying child or her estranged lover. Master in every cunning art, I was the slave of fate and of nature; all I enjoyed I did not enjoy, because I craved to enjoy it for ever. I sighed for constancy in mortal things, in which constancy is not. I strove to command fortune and futurity, which will not be commanded. I married a wife, and then another, and each was a burden more weary than the last. I became the father of children, and they died, or turned against me in their hearts. I made myself lord over science and over great estates, and I found myself the slave and steward of my possessions, and a vain babbler before the vulgar whom I knew I deceived. And yet, so long as the soul of nature fed the fountain of my being, it could not give over gushing and spreading and filling every cleft and hollow of opportunity. Even now, when the fountain is cut off, I yearn for that existence which was my torment; and my unhappiness has outlived its cause, and become eternal.

THE STRANGER: Since Spirit is not attached to one form of life rather than to another, may it not consent to dismiss each in turn?

If we do not renounce the world, we must expect the world to forsake us. The union of spirit with nature is like the sporting friendships of youth which time dissolves naturally, without any quarrel. It was a happy union, and in a life like yours, full of great feats, there is more satisfaction in having lived than regret that life is over. But you know all this better than I; and if you choose playfully to lament your eclipse on earth (while you shine immortally here) I suspect you do so merely to rebuke me gently for playing the truant while I am still at school, and troubling you here prematurely by my illicit presence, when I ought to be living lustily, as you did, while yet I may.

AVICENNA: You? If I had been condemned to live in your skin, and in the world, as it appears to be now, when there is nothing but meanness in it, I should not lament my present condition, because sad as it is, at least it is not ignoble. The only good thing remaining in your world is the memory of what it was in my day, and before: so that I am far from chiding you for spending your life, as far as possible, in our society, by rehearsing the memorials which remain of us, and which enable you, even in your day, to employ your time humanly, in the study of wisdom. I did that, too, with intense zeal; but the earth was then propitious, and my soul was mighty, and every other art and virtue was open to me, as well as the wisdom of the ancients. You do well to water your little flower-pot, as I ranged over my wide preserves. Life is not a book to read twice: and you cannot exchange the volume fortune puts in your hand for another on a nobler subject or by a better poet. In reading it you should not look ahead, or you will skip too much. It is not the ending that matters. This story has no moral; it stops short. The ending is not there, it is here; it is the truth of that life seen as a whole. Brave men, like me, who skip nothing, are not disappointed; at every turn they come upon something unforeseen, and do something bold. In the market of fortune I bought my apples without weighing them. If one had a worm in it, I threw it away laughing, my eye already on the next. Reason is like a dog that explores the road and all the bye-ways when we walk abroad; but he cannot choose a direction or supply a motive for the journey, and we must whistle to him when we take a new turn.

THE STRANGER: Ah, you lived in an age of freedom. You were not ashamed of human nature, and if life was full of dangers, you

were full of resource. Had we that strength, life would yield matter enough even in our day; but no wealth of instruments can enrich a mind that has not elevation for commanding them. You prize the world because you were its master. Had you ever been the slave of business and love and opinion, as men are in my time, you would not regret being rid of them. You praise them because you made sport of them intellectually; and destiny has done no injustice to your true nature in relegating you to this land of unconquerable mind. Mind in you was always supreme. Fortune and passion were merely the pawns in its game. That is why you can now regret them. Mere life and mere love have no memory; the present dazzles them with its immediate promise, which the next moment denies or transforms. They roll on, and the flux of nature sucks them up altogether. But when intellect, as in you, comes to dominate life and love, these acquire a human splendour. The stream becomes the picture of a stream, the passion an ideal. As the privilege of matter is to beget life, so the joy of life is to beget intellect; if it fails in that, it fails in being anything but a vain torment.

AVICENNA: Certainly I was a man, and not a beast. I gloried in my actions, because I understood and controlled them; they were my retainers, standing with swords drawn before my gates, my servants spreading the feast before me, my damsels singing and dancing before my ravished eyes. Now, alas, I am a monarch without subjects; reason in me has nothing to rule, and craft nothing to play with. Dear warm plastic flesh of my body and marrow of my bones, once so swiftly responsive to every heavenly ray, where are you scattered now? To what cold thin dust are you turned? What wind whirls you about in vain revolutions amid the sands of the desert? Never, alas, never (since Allah denies you the hope of resurrection) will you be gathered again into a mirror without a flaw, into a jewel of a thousand rays, in order that the potency of life, which never ceases to radiate from the Most High, might be gathered and reflected in you, to your joy and to his glory. Barren you shall ever be of intelligence; and barren my intelligence must remain in me here, impotently pining for the flash in which it grew.

THE STRANGER: Is not sterility in ultimate things a sign of supremacy? We disciples of Aristotle know that there is something ultimate and supreme in the flux of nature, even the concomitant

NOCTURNE

form or truth which it embodies, and the intellect which arrests that form and that truth. This intellect ought to be sterile, because it is an end and not a means. The lyre has performed its task when it has given forth the harmony, and the harmony, being divine, has no task to perform. In sounding and in floating into eternal silence, it has lent life and beauty to its parent world. Therefore I account you happy, renowned Avicenna, in spite of your humorous regrets; for what survives of you here is the very happiness of your life, realized in the intellect, as alone happiness can be realized; and if this happiness is imperfect, that is not because it is past, but because its elements were too impetuous to be reduced to harmony. This imperfect happiness of yours is all the more intelligible and comforting to me on account of its discords unresolved; they bring you nearer to my day and to its troubles. You have all we can hope for; and your frank lamentations, proving as they do the splendour of your existence, seem to me pure music in contrast to the optimism I must daily listen to in a wretched world.

NOCTURNE

BY ROBERT HILLYER

If the deep wood is haunted, it is I
Who am the ghost; not the tall trees
Nor the white moonlight slanting down like rain
Filling the hollows with bright pools of silver.

A long train whistle serpentine around the hill
Now shrill, now far away.
Tell me, from what dark smoky terminal,
What train sets out for yesterday?

Or, since our spirits take off and resume
Their flesh as travellers their cloaks, O tell me where,
In what age and what country you will come
That I may meet you there.



Courtesy of the Daniel Gallery

BOY STEALING FORBIDDEN FRUIT. BY YASUO KUNIYOSHI

T

Sum
mess
not
Once
Shak
cons
them
affai
and
good
temp
his e
reali
is th
ters,
its e
the i

R
on t
spea
the
From
who
suffi
brou
word
Haz
the
artif

1 T
T

THE DEFINITION OF COMEDY

BY HERBERT READ

THE appearance of this first complete edition of Congreve,¹ edited with animation and masterly erudition by Mr Montague Summers, is an event of some importance. Congreve has, if not a message, at least an attitude of much significance for us, for reasons not altogether unconnected with our present state of consciousness. Once a name has become established in a literary tradition, as Shakespeare's and Congreve's have in ours, they act as reflectors of consciousness, and even become more interesting as such than in themselves. We may say that this is a very reprehensible state of affairs—that the critic should see all things *sub specie aeternitatis* and so try to estimate even Shakespeare on grounds that will be good for all time. It would be a very pretentious critic that attempted the task, for no one can escape from all the influences of his environment and set up for an absolute intelligence. Nor is it really desirable that any one should: the modern consciousness is the only thing that is real and therefore the only thing that matters, and to explain this consciousness either historically, by showing its evolution from traditional forms, or prophetically, by showing the implications of its trend, is the proper duty of the critic.

Rather more than a hundred years ago Hazlitt, in his Lectures on the English Comic Writers, first used the word "artificial" in speaking of Congreve. Charles Lamb immediately afterwards gave the word, in the same connexion, a currency of charm and fashion. From that day to this—the day of Mr Gosse and the reviewers who slavishly follow where he misleads—the word "artificial" has sufficed to explain Congreve and the school of comedy which he brought to perfection. It should be noted straightaway that the word is used in a commendatory or at least an apologetic sense. Hazlitt thought the character of Millamant "better adapted for the stage" (than that of Imogen or Rosalind) because "it is more artificial, more theatrical, more meretricious." Lamb, developing

¹ The Complete Works of William Congreve. 4 volumes. 4to. 987 pages. The Nonesuch Press, London. 4 guineas.

this suggestion, excused what he really thought an indulgence "beyond the diocese of the strict conscience" by ascribing to the comedies of Wycherley and Congreve (in an essay by very name on the *Artificial Comedy*) an imaginary "land of cuckoldry—the Utopia of gallantry, where pleasure is duty, and the manners perfect freedom." Comedy thus became for him an inverse sort of idealism, in which actions and sentiments had their being on a plane quite removed from actuality, and therefore quite remote in influence.

Hazlitt and Lamb were in a real dilemma. They had boundless admiration for the wit and artistry of these comedies, but they could not reconcile them with the moral consciousness of their own age. Or, if this seems to put too much stress on *moral* consciousness, very much the same difficulty was involved by the romantic consciousness then equally rife. The moral code would balk at the profligacy of Wycherley's and Congreve's characters: the romantic code, in mute conspiracy, would shy at the cynical realism with which these authors treated the passion of love, or the feminine mind. Therefore a process known to the psychologist as "rationalization" supervened and the theory of artificial comedy was elaborated. It was a plausible idea and the dilemma was effectively shelved in the subconscious mind.

By 1841 the moral consciousness had stiffened. The Victorian age was in full vigour, and Macaulay, writing in that year, was able to dismiss Lamb's theory of artificial comedy as "altogether sophistical"—not because he thought such a theory derogatory to the literary merits of the plays in question, but because he felt it to be a lame defence of a literature inherently perverse and corrupted.

"In the name of art, as well as in the name of virtue, we protest against the principle that the world of pure comedy is one into which no moral enters. If comedy be an imitation, under whatever conventions, of real life, how is it possible that it can have no reference to the great rule which directs life, and to feelings which are called forth by every incident of life? . . . But it is not the fact that the world of these dramatists is a world into which no moral enters. Morality constantly enters into that world, a sound morality, and an unsound morality; the sound morality to be insulted, derided, associated with everything mean and hateful; the unsound morality to be set off to every advantage, and inculcated by all methods, direct and indirect."

And so on. With Macaulay's main contention we agree. The world of our comic dramatists *is* real, and is meant to be real. Lamb's argument *is* altogether sophistical. But Macaulay's is something worse. It is heterodox criticism of the most subversive type. It is the utter confusion of morality and art. "The question," says Macaulay, "is simply this, whether a man of genius who constantly and systematically endeavours to make this sort of character attractive, by uniting it with beauty, grace, dignity, spirit, a high social position, popularity, literature, wit, taste, knowledge of the world, brilliant success in every undertaking, does or does not make an ill use of his powers. We own that we are unable to understand how this question can be answered in any way but one." But this, as applied to Congreve, and even to Wycherley, is a misstatement of the position and a misunderstanding of the men. But before we can answer Macaulay's question, in a way he would be unable to understand, we must be clear as to what we intend by the function of comedy.

The distinction between wit and humour, which is the first essential of the matter, has often been attempted, but, except in a few sharp phrases of Meredith's, with no very satisfactory results. Hazlitt's antitheses are merely descriptive, and in the manner of such criticism, end insignificantly.

"Humour is the describing the ludicrous as it is in itself; wit is the exposing it, by comparing it or contrasting it with something else. Humour is, as it were, the growth of nature and accident; wit is the product of art and fancy. Humour, as it is shewn in books, is an imitation of the natural or acquired absurdities of mankind, or of the ludicrous in accident, situation and character; wit is the illustrating and heightening the sense of that absurdity by some sudden and unexpected likeness or opposition of one thing to another, which sets off the quality we laugh at or despise in a still more contemptible or striking point of view. . . . Wit hovers round the borders of the light and trifling, whether in matters of pleasure or pain. . . . Wit is, in fact, the eloquence of indifference. . . ."

Hazlitt also makes use of Congreve's own conception of humour as "a singular and unavoidable manner of doing or saying anything, Peculiar and Natural to one Man only; by which his Speech and

Actions are distinguished from those of other Men" (Letter to Mr Dennis concerning Humour in Comedy). But this is using "humour" in the rather special sense given to it by Ben Jonson, and does not really touch the distinction between humour and wit. Such a "humour" is rather the object on which humour in the general sense may be exercised. We must adopt some more precise distinction.

I would suggest one that may be readily used: humour differs from wit in the degree of action implied; or, to express the same idea psychologically, in the degree of introversion or extroversion expressed. The more the comic spirit resorts to activity or accident to gain its point, the more it tends to humour; and, in the contrary direction, the more the comic spirit seeks to achieve its effect in abstract or intellectual play, the better it merits the term wit. This distinction implies a no-man's-land where the categories overlap; and as a matter of fact it is in such a no-man's-land that some of the best English comedies, such as Wycherley's *Country Wife*, and *Plain Dealer*, have their peculiar existence.

This pragmatical distinction conforms to the guiding idea of Meredith's *Essay on Comedy*—the idea of comedy as the humour of the mind.

"The comic poet is in the narrow field, or enclosed square of the society he depicts; and he addresses the still narrower enclosure of men's intellects, with reference to the operation of the social world upon their characters. [And again:] The Comic, which is the perceptive, is the governing spirit, awakening and giving aim to the powers of laughter, but it is not to be confounded with them: it enfolds a thinner form of them, differing from satire, in not sharply driving into the quivering sensibilities, and from humour, in not comforting them and tucking them up. . . ."

But it is time to return to Macaulay—and then to Congreve. Macaulay's moral outburst will now be seen to involve a misconception of comedy and indeed of all art. It is also based on a mis-statement of fact: The "morality" of Congreve's plays is far from being that of "low town-rakes" and "dashing Cyprians." One could search in vain, even in the sort of literature approved by Macaulay, for characters more agreeable than Valentine and

Angelica, or indeed, for a play more generally salutary in its theme than *Love for Love*. In *The Double Dealer* the true lovers, Mellefont and Cynthia, are perfect exemplars of virtue, vigorously contrasted against the villainy of Maskwell and Lady Touchwood. The conventional propriety of the Mourning Bride has never been questioned, except by Jeremy Collier, who descends to the lowest level of his crassness in the attempt. Voltaire's astonishment at the "cleanliness" of Congreve is well known. But this kind of justification, though possible, is otiose. Art is a general activity, and any limitations to its scope are meaningless and arbitrary. It includes in its field of vision the immoral as well as the moral—and all other qualities of the human mind. The question of values is relative and only concerns the artist in a formative sense; and such values are the general values of culture, among which the moral values have no special precedence. They are part of that perceptive sense which is the fund of character; and it is the quality of the artist's mind, as Henry James said, that determines the deepest quality of his art. But to require, in the manner of Macaulay, that the artist's moral conscience should sit in judgement as his characters take shape in his imagination, is a stupidity of the most elementary kind, showing a complete misunderstanding of the function of art and of the psychology of the artist. It was the same stupidity that caused Macaulay to heap ridiculous praise on Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*. ". . . whose hysterical screaming and scoldings," writes Mr Summers in a characteristic passage, "were to some degree perpetuated by being condensed in the vapid and lack-lustre philippics of one who was both pedant and prig, Thomas Babington Macaulay."

There is every evidence that Congreve was no mere genius of the instinctive order, but a critical writer fully conscious of the nature of his powers. I have already quoted from the Letter to Dennis; there are more passages of the same nature to be culled. In his reply to Collier's attack Congreve fell back on the Aristotelian definition of comedy as "an Imitation of the worst sort of People . . . in respect to their Manners." Again, in the Dedication of the *Double Dealer* he had replied to the accusation that he represented some Women as vicious and affected in these words:

"How can I help it? It is the business of a Comick poet to paint

the Vices and Follies of Humane kind; and there are but two sexes that I know, viz. *Men* and *Women*, which have a Title to Humanity: And if I leave one half of them out, the work will be imperfect. I should be very glad of an opportunity to make my Complement to those Ladies who are offended; but they can no more expect it in a Comedy than to be Tickled by a Surgeon when he's letting 'em blood. They who are Virtuous or Discreet should not be offended, for such Characters as these distinguish them, and make their Beauties more shining and observ'd: And they who are of the other kind, may nevertheless pass for such, by seeming not to be displeased or touched with the Satyr of this *Comedy*."

This is very like Meredith's spirit of Comedy. The weakness, if weakness there is, lies in the word *satire*—not that it is used by Congreve with any special deliberation. But it marks a certain lack of perception, least noticeable in Congreve among all his contemporaries, but still present. "Our English school," writes Meredith, "has not clearly imagined society; and of the mind hovering above congregated men and women, it has imagined nothing." Further on in the same Essay, Meredith quotes Landor: "'Genuine humour and true wit require a sound and capacious mind, which is always a grave one,'" and he then remarks: "Congreve had a certain soundness of mind; of capacity, in the sense intended by Landor, he had little." This charge is well placed and skilfully supported by chapter and verse; and must for the present be recorded as the final word on Congreve. Of Congreve's character we derive from his letters and from contemporary accounts a fairly real conception; it lives best in Swift's epithet "unreproachful." But it adds nothing to the critical question. Of his mind we know less. From such writings as the Amendments to Mr Collier's False and Imperfect Citations and the Discourse on the Pindarique Ode we can judge it to have been learned and even a little pedantic. His lack of capacity would seem to have been rather in the nature of a defect of vision. But vision is an idle word which we must try to make a little more precise.

The comic spirit, in Meredith's sense, is subject to three declensions or diminutions of effect. It can become, as Satire, angry and acidulated—an instrument of invective and not of persuasion. It can become, as Irony, indirect and uncertain. And as Humour it

can identify itself with its object, revelling in the situation rather than offering any solution of it. Congreve is alert enough not to stray into any of these by-ways of the comic spirit; but it cannot be said that his conceptions are always "purely comic, addressed to the intellect." The epithet that fits them best is *cynical*: it is not the calm curious eye of Meredith's spirit, but the calm *incurious eye* appropriate to another attitude.

Of cynicism one can say little but that it is the spirit of comedy without gravity, without profundity. When we pass from Congreve to Molière, or even to Meredith himself, we have left an arid for a rich amusement. Perhaps there are epochs in history, as certainly there are periods in life, when no attitude but cynicism is possible, because despair is too inevitable. And perhaps the end of the Seventeenth Century was such an epoch, as our own day seems to be another. In any case, such a supposition would go far to explain the only defect of Congreve's comedy, and whilst explaining it, make it forgiveable.

But in the process of explanation we must never forget the real achievement. Congreve's quality at its best, in *The Way of the World*, is of a texture, undeniably intellectual, that baffles the would-be analyst. To begin with, it is impossible to trace it down to a passage or a phrase. It lives in the characters, who are created by suggestion rather than by description. It becomes more a matter of localized fact in the extremely efficient and finely rhythmed style. This one might illustrate at random from any of the four comedies. A soliloquy of Mirabell's from *The Way of the World* will serve (Millamant has just left him with a "when you have done thinking of that, think of me"):

"*Mira*. I have something more—Gone—Think of you! To think of a Whirlwind, tho' 'twere in a Whirlwind, were a Case of more steady Contemplation; a very tranquility of Mind and Mansion. A Fellow that lives in a Whirlwind, has not a more whimsical Dwelling than the Heart of a Man that is lodg'd in a Woman. There is no Point of the Compass to which they cannot turn, and by which they are not turn'd; and by one as well as by another; for Motion not Method is their Occupation. To know this, and yet continue to be in Love, is to be made wise from the Dictates of Reason, and yet persevere to

play the Fool by the force of Instinct.—O here come my pair of Turtles—What, billing so sweetly! Is not Valentine's Day over with you yet?"

I have selected this passage for the perfect management of transitions, for the mastery of phrase, and for the perfect use of rhythm and alliteration; but I doubt if I could find a better one to illustrate the real basis of thought, or, as we should perhaps say nowadays, of psychological observation, that after all sets Congreve's comedies apart from those of his contemporaries, not excepting even Wycherley. The oppositions of Motion and Method, of Reason and Instinct, though embodied in comic play, are not there by chance; and for their date they strike a strangely modern note, a note that sounds again and again as we read through these plays, making Congreve significant to our own generation in a sense only shared by Donne among the English writers of the Seventeenth Century.

VISION

BY MABEL SIMPSON

It was a day in winter
When quiet hours go,
That I saw the Saviour
Walking in the snow.

His feet left no footprints,
His steps fell as light
As leaves in the autumn,
As dew in the night.

And when He went passing
The Sun took His hand,
And light filled the valley
And spread through the land.



NEW ARRIVALS AT THE FAIR. BY JACK B. YEATS





THE OLD HARNESS CART. BY JACK B. YEATS

C

V

And
at I
rapi
Rhi
the
swa
a so
flav
heat
bei

R-

hap
str
sun

the
Ab
at

ra

st
gl
I
an
he
an
fi

PARIS LETTER

December, 1923

CAN I write a Paris Letter here in this commandeered hotel, this interallied mausoleum?

We are never closer to what we love than when we are far away. And besides I am not going to write about Paris, for to-night I am at Düsseldorf, in the Rhineland. Passing before me are stenographers whose eyes are invitations to a dance, French soldiers, Rhinelanders with their delicate faces; women look at sausages in the shopwindows as their sisters in the rue de la Paix look at Cartier; swans are asleep in the canal. Triumphant autumn reigns here and a sort of modest voluptuousness, quite in keeping with the country's flavour. I recognize a crystalline noise, the prettiest in the world, heard before in Barcelona and Dublin: it is the big shopwindows being shattered in the food-riots of the unemployed.

To-night I am to meet my friend the Rhenish painter, Hugo von R—. He has arranged to meet me at the railway station. Perhaps he is taking a train? I wait for him, the moon comes up, the streets grow empty. It is the curfew hour. He comes wearing his summer overcoat, with a violet comforter, under an 1840 sky.

"I am meeting you here," he says, "because the station-buffet is the swellest night restaurant in Düsseldorf. It is the poor man's Abbaye. You can try their quite possible French *pinard*, tax free at two francs a litre."

We step over the sleeping blue forms of soldiers on leave. Hugo raises his glass and invokes Rimbaud:

"Les Bacchantes des banlieues sanglotent et la lune brûle et hurle."

"I can't work any more," he tells me. "My mornings go in standing in line at the bank to buy some money; then a fresh struggle to buy something to eat. When that's over night has come and I haven't a cent for light. So I roll myself up in old newspapers and stay in my studio, without sleeping. There's nothing to buy here now except liquor. (You'll always find that.) I feel that I am going mad, like everyone else, like our government with four or five wars on its hands. Your mistake is in treating us as if we were

normal human beings when we are really in the last stages of nervous prostration. Visit the shady gambling dens, the blind bars, the houses of prostitution: when the dawn comes you will see all those night wanderers in the lowest depths of human misery; they cry, they grind their teeth, they kiss each other. The paint runs down the cheeks of the men and women. What can you expect? You can't always find shelter in theosophy or cocaine or speculation. Debauchery is a sure refuge only for the French who know enough not to abuse it."

An accordion had begun to play. Two German girls wearing soldier's caps danced together; in the waiting room the Jewish Black Bourse kept on changing marks all night—the almshouse of defeated currencies, of wounded exchanges, an invisible *mont de Piété*.

I think of the admirable pages on Germany at the end of Giraudoux's Siegfried et le Limousin¹: "*Pauvre grande nation qui n'est plus que chair, que poumons et digestion à jour et sans douce peau.* . . ." Hugo von R—— raises a starved hand with mysterious gems on the thumb:

"*'Obligé pour gagner le ciel d'invoquer la pharmacie et la sorcellerie,' Baudelaire dixit.*"

Hugo introduces me to a Polish girl with puffed cheeks and porcelain breasts; she is a jockey and rode last June in the Great Red Derby at Moscow. I ask her to dance; we both rise. But a fabulous iron roar bursts upon us, a thick smoke blots out the whole room: it is the Essen train coming into the station; driven by an engineer from the Midi, with eyes of coal, the red-robed locomotive traverses our dance-hall and cuts our first fox-trot into a thousand pieces.

The scene is in London, a great mansion in Carlton House Terrace. Who spoke of unemployment? The guests hurry over the Chinese rugs, smash the Chippendale settees, and in the antechamber a Longhi ballet is danced by candle-light. Percy S——, his monocle in his eye, is driven by his Irish-American humour to pursue the beautiful Russian refugees and murmur sadistically, "I've just come from Moscow. The old world is all gone. Nothing is left, nothing, I assure you."

¹ Admirably translated by Louise Collier Willcox under the title, *My Friend From Limousin*. Harper and Brothers, 1923.

I am greeted with cries by Miss L——, a kind of charmingly affectionate American Zeppelin, inflated with fashion and pleasure. "You've come from Paris?" she cries. "Tell me about Barbette."

Of course. Is there room for anything but Barbette in Paris since Autumn? What, you don't know, you haven't heard, you haven't seen Barbette? You *date* frightfully. At the Casino de Paris, in a darkened auditorium, a charming young woman, slender, blond, with delicate gestures, dressed in black tulle with a green bow, rises on the trapeze. At once she flies out in a semi-circle. Her white legs are like the hands of an enormous clock, she touches the chandelier, disappears into the flies, returns, slackens her hold on the ropes and is falling into the boxes. . . . No, at the last possible moment Barbette catches on by one leg—no, by one foot—by one toe, and in the midst of our shouts comes down to bow, takes off her wig—and before us stands a young American boy with glossy black hair. He is a mania with Paris; there are Barbette frocks, Barbette waltzes, princesses give Barbette teas, Cocteau is writing a Barbette ballet. Without that magic word you can know nothing of Paris in the early winter of 1923. I think of Swinburne: "To what strange end hath some strange god made fair"

I meet Constance C—— who was yesterday a commercial traveller in revolutions and to-day a collector of tyrants. She tells me of her sentimental interview with Mussolini: "What a man! I've still black and blue marks on my arms." Like the crowd, she is the victim of the man of the day, and she is right. Where are the men of yesterday? Here the room is full of princes willing to recount the assassination of Rasputin; the Crown Prince returns to Germany and would gladly go to prison if only people would talk about him: it is vain. They are the victims of yesterday; they come too late, like Proust's letters of condolence which used to reach widows after they had remarried—they never forgave him.

Poor Proust! On an icy morning last November we met again, some of us, in the church of St Pierre de Chaillot where a year ago our grief had brought us together. From a distance I caught sight of Doctor Proust, his brother, and had fleetingly the impression of seeing Marcel Proust himself: the same black hair parted in the middle, the same magnificent Oriental eyes, the same way of bowing, very low and all of a piece, his head sunk between his shoulders; but closer at hand individual differences assert themselves and the

first impression disappears. I thought of the pleasant evenings we had spent together until the hour when the streets are dead. Where is the white wooden box from which Proust would pull out yellowed photographs of Princess Mathilde, of young Montesquiou in an English suit of 1880 with big checks; of Maupassant on a bicycle in white canvas shoes; of Lucien Daudet as a child; of Prince Edmond de Polignac and his friend M Haas, comrade of the Prince of Wales and model in a large measure for Swann; of the Princess of Monaco wearing leg-of-mutton sleeves (Proust remarks "This one is Luynes; he seems to be saying what he said of the G——'s: 'How can one receive those people. *They had absolutely no standing in the year one thousand.*'"); and of Maurice Rostand whose perfumes, even through closed doors, gave Proust spasms of asthma. . . . How annoyed with myself I am now for having always broken up our conversations to go home, for having slept, for not having noted down, the next day, the admirable discourses of Proust, every word of which should have been preserved. "Now that you have disturbed me I shan't be able to work to-night, my dear Paul, so do stay. . . . Céleste can prepare us some fried potatoes. Take a little champagne. . . ." I could not drink as much as a glass of that warm sweetened champagne which stood beside his *café au lait*. Where is it now? Where is that admirable friend?

The memory of another of the departed has been revived this year by the burning eulogy of his friends: Apollinaire. Five years ago he succumbed to Spanish influenza in the course of that autumn which he had sung with such emotion:

*"Mon automne éternelle, ô ma saison mentale
les mains des amantes d'antan jonchent ton sol
une épouse me suit, c'est mon ombre fatale
les colombes ce soir prennent leur dernier vol."*

The memory of Apollinaire has remained very vivid; his friends complain that he has been betrayed and exploited, which is one way of not being forgotten. His admirers find his influence in the poetry, painting, ballet, and farce of after the war. That is correct, up to a certain point. I think I can speak impartially of Apollinaire; I was not associated with him. I am equally removed from those who

say, "We owe him everything," and those who say, "He made the atmosphere of art unbreathable." The marvelous intelligence of Apollinaire was the first to feel, to grasp, and to utilize certain phenomena which had been in gestation since 1910; but it must be said that these phenomena had their origin in causes far more general than the will of a single man—I mean what we call "the new spirit," cubism, futurism, African art, Russian music, the primitives, Jarry and Ubu-Roi, Rousseau, the post-Cézannians, and so on. . . . All of these were not confined to the single framework of the *Soirées de Paris* (1912-14) however interesting that review may have been with Apollinaire and his collaborators, Max Jacob, Dys-sord, Dalize, Salmon, Billy, Alan Seeger, Harrison Reeves, and others. Can we not find the profounder causes for all this?

Apollinaire was a marvelous liaison officer between artists, a carrier of germs, rather than the creator of the new world of forms and ideas which we call ours. But we are none the less grateful to him. He was a delicious, not a great, poet, in the order of Baudelaire—in spite of what André Billy says in his recent book, *Apollinaire Vivant*. Bad taste in literature, imposture in art, the various mystifications whose advent has been so thoroughly heralded even to-day when all this is becoming a fashion—these were already finding expression in Picasso or Max Jacob, "the kabbalist and the star-gazer"; the calligramme was honoured among us in the Sixteenth Century, the rhymed letter and the little play for special occasions in which the poets of Louis XIII reached perfection before those of the Eighteenth Century, were revived about 1880 by Mallarmé and it would not be hard to discover in Rimbaud the earliest form of the "conversation-poems" which are the basis of cubist poetry. Apollinaire, who was of Polish descent—his real name was Kostrowitzky—played with our art in all its forms, assimilating them immediately like so many new conquests. The case is not rare of a foreigner thus giving to national literary forms a new aspect by treating them from the outside, so to speak (Conrad, another Pole, is an example in English literature); in my opinion what is more significant and what will keep alive the name of Apollinaire¹ is his rehabilitation of joy in poetry, of good humour in letters. It is really in him that this new spirit, dominant to-day, has its source.

¹ A review by Henry McBride of Guillaume Apollinaire's *The Poet Assassinated* (Broom Publishing Company) will appear in *THE DIAL* shortly.

Never has Paris been so crowded. The number of foreigners has doubled in two years: there are now nearly half a million, and so much the better. Cities are beautiful only when they are overpopulated. If you require solitude, take the train. The streets groan, the boulevards crack. It is Carthage, Byzantium, Bagdad. Here are Ménilmontant and its Italian streets, Chinese restaurants in the Latin Quarter, Old-Turkish exiles in Passy, in Auteuil Greek refugees from Smyrna still smelling of the fire, Scandinavians in Montparnasse, Dutch diamond cutters in the rue de la Gaieté, Mid-European Jews in the old Fifteenth Century courtyards near the Hôtel de Ville and Levantine Jews eating their honeycakes behind the Bastille, Hungarian tailors in the Temple, Roumanians on the terrace of the Café de la Paix, Armenians in the rue Jean-Goujon, Swiss in their inns of the rue St Roch, Americans on the quays. The Russians are everywhere. Months ago they departed from Berlin, too expensive; from Constantinople, too Turkish; from Belgrade, too melancholy; and they are here. Montmartre at night is all Russian. I look forward with pleasure to a tableau of Foreigners in Paris and to the walks I shall take this winter, as a curious botanist of this new flora, in the company of the artist Pascin with his diabolical talent.

Of the new ballets in the repertoire of the Swedish organization I shall mention only the *Création du Monde*, as this work by Darius Milhaud, with *décors* by Léger and text by Cendrars, was not, I understand, given in New York. Except in the prelude Milhaud's music is perhaps less striking than his *l'Homme et Son Désir*, but it is none the less of capital importance because it is the result of laborious and conscientious efforts to adapt jazz to the orchestra—the same effort, with totally different results, is to be heard in Strawinsky. I believe however that in the course of his travels in Brazil and the United States Milhaud has grasped the essence of jazz more perfectly than any other composer. I agree with Georges Auric that it is in orchestra that the music of this ballet will take on the importance it deserves. Milhaud is hewing his path in accordance with his temperament which is southern and romantic. We are grateful to him because he remains always sincerely himself. The experiments of a Strawinsky are of a quite different order. We talked to-day about Derain in whom Strawinsky admires profoundly the constant bitter struggle with himself, regardless of any superficial unity in his work; success has obediently

followed him, but he has not followed up his successes as Picasso has done. Strawinsky with his large crystal-blue eyes full of genius spoke like a great classic master:

"A work does not have to be good or bad; it must be organic and identified with the artist. You must never present anything that isn't perfect. I have never given the public my experiments, my sketches. Each of my works represents something I tried to do the best I could, with all my strength. A piece is finished for me when I can go no farther. I stop at the edge of the abyss. . . . The farther I go, the less I shall work on the surface, the more insignificant, almost mediocre, the outside will be: everything will be within. That is what I came to with *Mavra*. Nothing disconcerts the public and the critics so much. They would rather take colossal pains to hear the *Sacre*, which demands an enormous tension and nervous effort."

I told him that his Octuor which had just been played in Paris was a sufficient indication of how this most noble struggle in the conscience of an artist was to end. "The piano concerto I am writing now," Strawinsky went on, "will restore to the piano, a magnificent instrument, all the importance it lost in the effort to equal and imitate the human voice. We forget that the piano is only an instrument of percussion; we are going to return to the clavichord, the old Erard." I reminded him that his studies for the pianola had already indicated this intention, and he agreed. The admirable honesty of the greatest composer of our time makes him kin to Bach and Beethoven and Gounod. Far from allowing his processes to harden, from succumbing to the arteriosclerosis of success, Strawinsky works always from the centre and that is why with each new work we are seized and captivated by so much novelty, be it a Ragtime or *Renard* or *Mavra*.

To return to the *Création du Monde*, Léger's *décors* constitute for me the most complete success in theatrical decoration since Bakst. The sobriety of the effects, the tonal solidity, the ingenuity of the designs and their varying combinations, the harmonious union of powerfully painted canvases and a new and skilful architecture, their suitability to the theme—nothing is lacking. The other new ballet, *Within the Quota*, was presented in New York; the music by Cole Porter is charming and the whole ballet with its mythical American characters is lively and amusing.

The entire summer passed almost without books, but now the

flood is on us. I want to mention an extraordinary historical synthesis edited by Henri Berr, in which each volume has been entrusted to a great French specialist. It is issued under the imprint of La Renaissance du Livre and is having a merited success with the general public. Chiefly to be noted are *la Terre avant l'Histoire* by Edmond Perrier, *Humanité Préhistorique* by Morgan, Vendryes' admirable book on Language, *Des Clans aux Empires* by Moret and Davy, and the most recent volume, *La Civilisation Egéenne* by Glotz.

For the novelists Jean Cocteau opened fire with *Thomas l'Imposteur*. This is Cocteau's first work with *la Nouvelle Revue Française*, and the auguries are happy. Certainly the group of authors in the N.R.F. will give Cocteau prestige, but he will bring them no less worthy nuptial gifts—the full possession of his talent as a story teller, his growing renown in France and abroad, and his poetic grace. *Thomas l'Imposteur* is the story of a sympathetic young adventurer who passes for what he is not during the war and deceives the whole world, Paris, the front, himself, but who does not succeed in deceiving death. Rising above the simple story of a credible character, Cocteau arrives in the midst of unforgettable descriptions, comic or touching, at a rare psychological study of pure imposture considered as one of the fine arts. This wholly successful book is to be read.

Jules Supervielle is an exquisite French poet born in South America; in the past his verses have brought us the perfumes of the great Spanish-American plains. He has now published a first novel, *l'Homme de la Pampa*, a fantastic story about an amateur of artificial volcanoes. It is Chesterton and Voltaire . . . and dada at times, bearing the mark of our generation which is simplicity and good humour. I note also *l'Equipage* by Kessel, a novel of wartime aviation from the pen of a young writer whose first work, a volume of Russian stories, *La Steppe Rouge*, was much remarked a year ago. Mireille Havet, the youngest and prettiest of our women novelists, began during the war with a story, *La Maison dans l'Oeil du Chat*, which made her famous; to-day she offers her first novel, *Carnaval*, full of a Parisian grace which is perhaps closer to reason than to love. *Les Enfants Perdus* by Georges Gabory is also the first prose work of a charming young poet. All these authors are twenty and some years old; they are our promises.

In literary criticism it is fitting to note M Thibaudet's study of Paul Valéry. There is a remarkable book by him on Mallarmé which has unfortunately been out of print for years and which the N.R.F. owes it to itself to republish. The present work is the most penetrating study of Valéry, that philosophical poet whose power is so unearthly, whose crystal clarity is so hermetical. Marcel Coulon has given us *Le Problème de Rimbaud*, a very remarkable analysis which unjustly rejects without discussion the Claudelian explanation of Rimbaud's genius and then arrives at very similar conclusions. The new editions of Gobineau are inexhaustible: after *Trois Ans en Asie* and a special number of the review, *Europe*, devoted to him, we now have *Fleur d'Or*, a collection of notes serving to explain his Renaissance, those dramatic tableaux which contain such a powerful synthesis of the Italian Sixteenth Century. In philosophy there has just appeared the first volume of Professor Georges Dumas' *Traité de Psychologie*, to be followed immediately by the second, final volume, and constituting the most exact summing up of the researches and achievements of French psychology since Ribot and Janet. Finally, a remarkable and useful *Anthologie Juive*, by Edmond Fleg, in two volumes, from the beginning to the Middle Ages, and from the Middle Ages to our day. It will happily make up for the backwardness of France, compared with other nations, in Jewish studies. I must also note Elie Faure's *Derain*, and *l'Age de Raison* by Lucien Daudet in which a most sensitive spirit retraces the life of Champresay, the ageing Alphonse Daudet, his son Léon as a medical student, and Edmond de Goncourt.

PAUL MORAND

BOOK REVIEWS

HORSES AND MEN

HORSES AND MEN. By Sherwood Anderson. 12mo.
346 pages. B. W. Huebsch. \$2.

ONE of the fundamental problems of serious fiction is that of the relation of theme and material, of the idea or generalization or philosophic attitude, whatever it may be, which gives fiction its meaning, and the human stuff through which it is projected into reality. It will be found, I think, that writers of fiction fall into two schools according as they tend to emphasize one or the other of these elements, and this emphasis determines their procedure. Either by reflection they choose a theme as a point of departure, and make their chief effort to find material with which to clothe it dramatically; or by observation they seize upon certain features of life and in the course of the portrayal of them disengage the idea which gives them meaning.

The distinction is not one between realists and idealists. Some of the most convinced realists—one need only think of Zola—have written fiction according to programme. English fiction, with its racially didactic and moralistic character, naturally furnishes many examples of the same sort, one of the best being the most advanced realist of her day—George Eliot. She speaks in a letter to Frederic Harrison of “the severe effort of trying to make certain ideas thoroughly incarnate, as if they had revealed themselves to me first in the flesh, and not in the spirit.” In America the older realists, Frank Norris, Robert Herrick, Theodore Dreiser, have been on the whole, novelists *à thèse*. Obviously, in the construction of a long novel a predetermined theme, which may become a thesis, is an advantage not to be lightly set aside. For the best examples of the second mode of procedure we must turn to the short story, especially the short story practised by the Russians, by Chekhov. No other writer has given so striking a demonstra-

tion of the results of starting from a point determined merely by some fortuitous concurrence of characters or forces and drifting with the human stream, impartially and disinterestedly, until at least the direction in which the current is flowing becomes clear. Readers of Chekhov's letters will remember how steadily he asserted the obligation of an artist to his material, even holding that he should refrain from falsifying it by conscious selection and arrangement.

Of this surrender to the current of reality, this letting nature have its way, Sherwood Anderson in his short stories has given the most distinct and outstanding examples in American fiction. This fact makes his case perennially and recurrently interesting, in spite of the unevenness of his work in detail, and the ambitious failures of his novels. The latter illustrate the difficulty of construction of a long work without the guidance of a predetermined theme, and, to some extent, Mr Anderson's own surrender to a method not his own. But in them, as in his short stories, it is clear that his chief effort is a quest for meaning through that objective reality of which his senses and his human contacts bring him so vivid an account. With the lavishness of material which his method permits and encourages he can afford failures. And after each novel he clears his intention and his art by a return to his true medium, the short story. After *Windy McPherson's Son*, came *Winesburg, Ohio*; after *Poor White*, *The Triumph of the Egg*; after *Many Marriages*, *Horses and Men*.

After each of Mr Anderson's collections critics have declared with enthusiastic hyperbole that one or another of the tales was the best short story ever written. I have seen this statement with reference to two of the present volume—I'm a Fool, and *The Man Who Became a Woman*. The reason for this is clear. A story comes so close to the critic's own perception of reality, reproduces so intimately his own experience, and so finds him out in the secret places of his soul that he is for the moment overwhelmed by it. The other stories he must judge externally; some of them will doubtless seem to the most devoted of Mr Anderson's readers mere waste land; but it is the hope, the expectation, of coming upon something so absolutely right that his sense of reality is completely satisfied that buoys up the reader, as it supports the author in his quest. And when that complete presentation of reality is achieved,

there is no need to have the result defined in syllogistic form, with the conclusion marked Q. E. D. or *hic fabula docet*. The interpretation is one with the record; the reader *knows*.

The present volume, like Winesburg, Ohio, has a certain unity. In Winesburg that unity was one of time and place; through the stories of a dozen people the author penetrated to the core of the social being of the little town and gave us a character sketch of it. In Horses and Men the unity is one of method. Each of the stories is the experience of another person into whom the author has entered so far as the barriers of isolation may be pierced. They are for the most part dramatic in the sense in which Browning so often used the term, dramatic realities instead of dramatic romances, parleyings with people of no importance. The least successful of the group, it seems to me, is the longest—Unused, in which the author is most remote from his material.

There is, of course, a danger in this method which all critics of Browning have pointed out—that of assimilating the expression of the characters to the author's own type, so that his mannerisms dominate the stage, and drama becomes monologue. In all cases Mr Anderson has chosen simple, primitive types for his avatars. This is the significance of the association, Horses and Men. The men are like Ed in Milk Bottles, who had "a rather sensitive, finely balanced nature, and it had got mussed up." All the protagonists are mussed up, and share in Whitman's aspiration to the clearness and simplicity of animals. With these primitive types in their blind, groping search, Mr Anderson associates himself.

To some this will seem merely a pose. But it is really an expression of his fundamental belief in the futility of conscious art or any other form of intelligence to achieve the deepest truth. To him Meredith's assertion: "Never was earth misread by brain" is foolishness. Earth is to be known, not read, by the senses, by the intuitions, by the unconscious. This makes it natural for him to renounce the usual emphasis of fiction. His stories are in a literal sense raw material. It is for the reader to complete the process of bringing them into the function and service which is the reason of art.

ROBERT MORSS LOVETT

MRS WHARTON'S AGE OF FAITH

A SON AT THE FRONT. By Edith Wharton. 12mo.
426 pages. Charles Scribner's Sons. \$2.

MRS WHARTON'S A Son at the Front, though of very little literary importance, is by no means so bad a novel as it seems to have got the reputation of being. It is a great deal better, for example, than Glimpses of the Moon. The truth is, of course, I feel, that Mrs Wharton may never do another really important book for the reason that she has come to accept life, whereas the strength of her earlier work lay in the violence of her reaction against it.

Mrs Wharton's great feat has been writing the tragedy of the civilization of eastern America during the last decades of the last century and the first decade of this. The Age of Innocence presented the suffocation of an intelligent and imaginative man in the provincial New York society of the 'seventies; The House of Mirth the destruction of a young woman with the instinct, but without the moral courage, to take life with an honourable seriousness at the hands of the aimless, extravagant, bridge-playing, rich people of the early nineteen hundreds; Ethan Frome the starvation of the passions against the poverty of the New England hills; and The Custom of the Country the almost apocalyptic swallowing up not only of the last respectable remnants of the native cultural tradition, but also of the old American integrity and geniality of the pioneer period and perhaps even of European civilization itself by the brassy and unteachable vulgarity of the hideous Undine Spragg. It is the intensely rendered tragedy of a world in which the life of the mind and the heart is pitilessly lopped down to the measure of narrow conventional values and in which the obverse of a life of poverty without any of the amenities of civilization is a life of overpowering affluence more blighting to the soul than want.

When Mrs Wharton was speaking her resentment against those things she wrote some of the most moving and vivid of American novels: she dignified the society of an intellectually undignified period by proving the acuteness of the suffering it could produce

and at her best she carried her vision so far as to reveal in the local disaster the universal breaking of man on the wheel of his own limitations. But of late this almost feverish resentment has commenced to clear away. Mrs Wharton has come finally to adjust herself to a closer harmony with life. She has learned benevolence and faith (always, of course, implicit in her hatreds and scepticisms, but rarely till now positively expressed). Glimpses of the Moon was like *The House of Mirth* rewritten with a happy ending and with a surprising confidence, for Mrs Wharton, in the panacea provided by the married state; New Year's Day (lately published in a magazine) was the history of an heroic sacrifice performed by the wife for an invalid husband and probably unique among Mrs Wharton's sacrifices in not turning out to be in vain; and now in *A Son at the Front* she writes the diary of the unfolding of a devoted romantic faith in the cause of the late Allies. But her gain, one is sorry to feel, is, on the whole, our loss. She has learned benevolence and faith too late to make them effective as literary motive forces; the engine has already withstood too much wear and tear from the explosions of the old indignation.

Yet *A Son at the Front* is not merely a sentimental war story which anybody might have written. It has at least the dramatic and technical virtues of all her full-length novels—the mastery of complicated material, the *entraînement* in setting it in motion and the illusion of actual personal and social values in continually changing interaction. And the minor characters at their best are quite worthy of her more ruthless period. Her enthusiasm for the war can by no means reconcile her to all its supporters, and we have such sketches as that of the rich Mr Mayhew with the horn-rimmed glasses, from Utica, who displays such fierce apostolic fury in espousing the cause of the Allies because he had been detained by the Germans for eight days in a Belgian hotel. Furthermore, as a study of the middle-aged civilian mind in reaction to the war—and it does not pretend to be anything else—*A Son at the Front* is probably accurate and intelligent. It is a sort of American Mr Britling without Wells' bogus evangelism. Finally, the relation between the elderly American artist and the dry, precise, inarticulate banker who has married the artist's divorced wife and thereby taken over his son, is rendered with great delicacy and truth. In the mingled sense of a worldly inferiority on the part of the artist toward the

man who can give his son the benefit of money which the artist has foresworn ever trying to make, and of a scornful superiority of the intelligent man engaged in doing something which he thinks important, toward the tasteless inflexible creature who has spent his whole life in a bank, with the bitter and unjust antagonism engendered by the combination, Mrs Wharton has added another significant notation to her history of the American soul.

EDMUND WILSON

AUBREY BEARDSLEY

SOME UNKNOWN DRAWINGS OF AUBREY BEARDSLEY.
*Collected and Annotated by R. A. Walker. 8vo. 71
pages. R. A. Walker. London. 25 shillings.*

IN his Modern Art Meier-Graefe rightly acclaimed Aubrey Beardsley as being one of the "few indispensable artists," adding that "it is necessary to see every one of his fragments."

As the years go on, the verdict of the most intelligent contemporary critics of France, Germany, England, and America is becoming universally accepted, namely that Beardsley was a profound and original genius. Beardsley's fame is constantly growing, and one must go as far back as Ingres and Daumier to discover a draughtsman whose drawings are as eagerly sought after. In addition to private collectors, the Berlin National Gallery, the Luxembourg Museum, the Metropolitan Museum, the Fogg Museum, the British Museum, the National Gallery of British Art, and the South Kensington Museum have been acquiring Beardsley's designs.

The opening of two important exhibitions of Beardsley's work last autumn, the publication of a volume dealing with his drawings, and the announcement of another, are indications of the great interest in Beardsley's work. Significant too were the prices which two of his drawings fetched at Sotheby's on December eleventh, *The Birthday of Madame Cigale*, an early drawing, and *Isolde*, each bringing one hundred and fifty pounds.

A loan exhibition of Beardsley's drawings was inaugurated at the Tate Gallery in London on the first of November, and another at the Brooklyn Museum nineteen days later. The London exhibition included the only paintings in oil which Beardsley executed, two in number, and bought a few months ago by the nation. From the admirable catalogue of this exhibition, with its valuable annotations, we learn that less than half of the fifty drawings displayed were line drawings, the others being in wash, chalk, charcoal, pencil, and line combined with either water-colour or Chinese white. Several portraits of Beardsley were also among the exhibits, as well as a caricature by "Max."

At the Brooklyn Museum, which every once in a while shatters all institutional traditions by being adventurous, a very large exhibition of Beardsley drawings was opened to the public. Although relegated to a screen in the hall, where they were crowded together in a haphazard fashion, this assemblage of Beardsleys was the important feature of a most miscellaneous collection of water-colours, drawings, pastels, and sculpture by both European and American practitioners of these arts. With the exception of a few drawings which he reserved for the London exhibition, all of Mr John Lane's large collection was there, as well as loans from a number of American collections. The alleged catalogue of these Beardsleys does not even indicate the number of drawings which were shown, but I am informed that a real catalogue is being prepared.

The material which Mr R. A. Walker publishes in his *Some Unknown Drawings of Aubrey Beardsley* was originally gathered for the Beardsley catalogue and bibliography which he has been on the point of publishing for a number of years. Owing to the fact that data for this book continues to pour in, and for other reasons, which he sets forth in the preface to his book, Mr Walker decided to publish this preliminary study, which is to be followed later on by his exhaustive volume treating of Beardsley and Beardsleyana. In the meantime, the Beardsley enthusiast will be very grateful for this book of *Some Unknown Drawings*, which contains much matter of great interest and importance. Another book which the Beardsley collector is eagerly awaiting is the *Third Book of Fifty Drawings* by Aubrey Beardsley which Mr John Lane has announced. I have seen most of the material which is to go into this book, and there are several new items which the collector will be glad to possess.

The first illustration in Mr Walker's book is a colour plate of Beardsley's painting entitled *A Caprice*, which he discovered. This is a curiously interesting picture, painted under the influence of Conder, Sickert, Nicholson, and Whistler, but withal possessing something of the Beardsley flavour. The composition is his own, being very similar to one of the *Yellow Book* drawings. Mr Walker is in error in stating that this is the only painting that Beardsley is known to have executed; this was a curious slip on his part, as of course he knows the painting entitled *Woman Regarding*

a Dead Mouse, painted on the back of A Caprice. Mr Walker reproduces a number of quite important drawings which are now published for the first time, including the original cover design for *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Echo of Venice, Head of a Man, and a caricature of Whistler. Of the unpublished drawings, however, that entitled Apollo Pursuing Daphne is by far the most important. Indeed, this is one of Beardsley's very finest drawings, the purity of its outline at once calling to mind a masterpiece of such of the Greek vase painters as Brygos. The author of this volume has also included several portraits of Beardsley, by Conder, Rothenstein, Blanche, and others. The painting by Blanche, it is interesting to note, has recently been purchased by the National Portrait Gallery. Drawings caricaturing Beardsley's technique which originally appeared in *Punch* have been reprinted, and photographic views of various houses inhabited by Beardsley, one of his grave at Mentone, and autograph letters reproduced in facsimile have also been included. In addition, we are glad to have good reproductions of several drawings which hitherto have only been known to us by very much reduced or poor engravings.

Mr Walker's volume is very well printed. The reproductions, which are in colour, in photogravure, in collotype, line, and half-tone, are notably good and reproduce the originals very faithfully. Interesting bibliographical and critical information is contained in the notes which accompany each reproduction.

A. E. GALLATIN

THE LADY STUFFED WITH PISTACHIO NUTS

JENNIFER LORN. By Elinor Wylie. 12mo. 302 pages. George H. Doran Company. \$2.50.

A CERTAIN difficulty arises in connexion with writing about a book to which one awards an unreserved enthusiasm, an agreeable difficulty, no doubt, but none the less a difficulty. This unnatural situation was the cause of a good deal of perplexity on my part after reading Jennifer Lorn; determining, therefore, to discover some small flaw, some rift in artistry, some hesitation in the creator's precision, I went straight through the book again; in vain, I may add, so far as the purposes of my pursuit were concerned. My enthusiasm mounted rather than ebbed. I rose, indeed, from this second perusal, confirmed in my belief that Jennifer Lorn is the only successfully sustained satire in English with which I am acquainted.

A satire of what? may be asked at this point, and the rather vague reply I must give to the question is another proof to my mind of the authentic quality of the book, for, unlike most satirists, Elinor Wylie has not aimed her subtle shafts consistently at one target. On the contrary, she has apparently a delightfully perverse profusion of aims, lifting Jennifer, thereby, out of the class of pastiches into a position in literature quite its own. That there are certain resemblances to the work of Philip Thicknesse and others of the elegant Eighteenth Century autobiographers is a recognizable part of the charm of this fine novel; that it suggests now and again the heightened absurdities of Zuleika Dobson, the oriental pageantry of Vathek, and the vivid narrative sense of the authors of the One Thousand and One Nights is unarguable. The essential fact, however, is that Elinor Wylie has risen superior to her models, and that Jennifer Lorn in the process of creation has become something rich and strange.

There is, indeed, inherent in the book a curious fusion of diverse elements, a fusion which justifies itself by its success. We find ourselves completely, no doubt, in the Eighteenth Century, so completely that, frequently, we are obsessed by the credibility of the en-

chanting tale. Elinor Wylie, it would seem, has achieved this effect by a meagre use of incident in the first hundred pages, and by a multiplication of fascinating detail which is staggering in its implication of the lady's knowledge of her selected *milieu* and period. At no time during her ironic recital, however, will the intelligent reader be too sure that the author has entirely forgotten that marriage is a tradition which persists even into our own day, or that Jennifer's rather absurd relations with Gerald may be repeated, shorn, certainly, of their decorative adjuncts, in any Ritz Hotel. But Elinor Wylie, as I have already stated, aims her satire at no one target; her own characters, her own impeccable style, do not escape the barbs from her bow; there is, indeed, a delicately sardonic smile in every line. And this smile she has mystically sustained over a range of three hundred pages by an instinctive reliance on her own capacity to entertain, and by a certain apparently careless grace, abetted no end by the loveliness of her well-chosen backgrounds, by the beauty that hovers constantly behind and above the wit, the descriptions of foods, jewels, dresses, and *objets d'art*, and by a style which I have already set down—surely this is ineluctable in relation to this narrative—as impeccable. Elinor Wylie's power, perchance, lies in her ability to regard life as simultaneously amusing and picturesque.

There are, naturally, high spots in the story; the chapter entitled The Basket of White Roses is a notable case in point, in which is related with great spirit Jennifer Lorn's incredibly diverting adventure with a young man in the conservatory at the British Ambassador's in Paris. Another noteworthy example is the melancholy charm, softly suffused with a sedate humour, of the final scene, in which Gerald rapes the Byzantine image of the Madonna from the languid fingers of the Persian Prince, dying of love on Jennifer's grave. But these are only more memorable pictures in a tapestry whose weave displays no knottings. Elinor Wylie, indeed, constantly manipulates charm and humour and beauty in the way that an expert electrician employs lights in the theatre; now one will be the predominant colour in a scene; now another; now all three expertly fused in a radiant conjunction. It is, quite possibly, a matter of instinct, but it is also a matter of extraordinary taste: the result, whatever the means, is superb art. Aside from the title, which is not, I understand, the author's choice, Jennifer Lorn may boast perfection.

It is the perfection of the artist who realizes her intention, the only perfection, perhaps, with which the critic should concern himself; although there is another approximate perfection which causes a book to arouse feelings in the critic or reader of which the author himself was never aware. It is also perfection on a small scale, like the perfection of the red jasper bowl which Gerald loved so much that he could not bring himself to bestow it on Jennifer. But this condition should be sufficiently obvious, that perfect works of art are always conceived in miniature. *Moby Dick* and *Hamlet* have their greatnesses; they also have their faults.

It is impossible to write at any length about this romance without making more than a passing reference to the characters; to, to begin with, the frail and swooning Jennifer, with her pale but blinding beauty, her aureole of golden hair, and her chaste and wifely demeanour under the most bewilderingly trying circumstances. I like her best, perhaps, when it seems fitting to her to sing old Scotch ditties in Shah Jehan's Hall of Private Audience at Delhi:

" . . . Jennifer Lorn standing in the exact centre of the miraculous pavilion of white marble and lifting her mournful little voice to cry, 'I've heard them littin' at our ewe-milkin'. . . . 'The flowers of the forest are all wede away.' Around her upon every hand were flowers innumerable of serpentine, lapis lazuli, and red and purple porphyry; they formed a delicate design upon the arches and patterned the silver ceiling above her head."

But Jennifer is pleasing to behold in all prospects and never fails to act according to the coeval code of morality and conduct, even when eloping with her Persian Prince, when conversing with Saint Amond in the gardens of Calcutta, or when in the toils of the evil procress Banou.

But, to brush aside a myriad of fascinating minor figures, I bow lowest to Gerald, that "fine flower of English gentlemen," of whom Jennifer, believing him dead, remarked:

" My dear husband was a superb horseman; his knowledge of history was amazing, and his fund of anecdote inexhaustible. As a travelling companion, and indeed in every other relation of life—she explained with a loyal little sob—he was the most superior person whom it has ever been my privilege to know. ”

Gerald, with his air of passive and polite contempt, his amiable and cold composure, thieving in India, the seat of his enormous fortune; Gerald, reading Candide and drinking brandy to relieve the tedium of an ocean voyage; Gerald, bartering for the jasper bowl, choosing a wife, entertaining that wife, during the honeymoon, with long anecdotes which for the most part concerned her own family history; Gerald, crushing the white roses, dispatched to Jennifer by her youthful admirer, under his heel in the courtyard of the Paris hotel; Gerald astride an elephant on the road to Delhi, "straight as a lance and stiff as a poker, accommodating himself in some uncanny fashion to the swinging pace of the monstrous animal; his face as immobile as a carven Buddha beneath the green umbrella which he habitually carried," an umbrella which he made "as awful as a sceptre and as ornamental as a lotus-flower"; Gerald beset by bandits, coolly firing until his ammunition is exhausted, hurling then his pistols at the heads of his assailants, and, finally, fencing with his cane; Gerald, overpowered by numbers, apparently staked through the heart and buried under stones, saved by his slenderness (the stake had penetrated his cloak alone); above all, Gerald, the magnificent, appearing to Jennifer and her Prince before the ruins of Persepolis, bearing himself "with such an air of elegance and pride that the very column lowering over his mortality seemed somewhat dwarfed by the perfection of his poise," quoting Marlowe, with a slight satirical smile; and, in the conclusion, Gerald in the garden of cypresses of the Khan's palace at Shiraz, extracting the miniature from the limp fingers of the expiring Prince.

"I believe this to be a Byzantine carving of great antiquity," said Gerald to himself complacently as he stepped from the cypress grove into the comparative brightness of the rose-garden. "The face bears a distinct resemblance to my late dear wife; this alone would render it valuable to me, but it is, quite apart from this consideration, an exquisite work of art. I am most fortunate to have procured it at the cost of so little expense or pain."

Gerald, in fact, is incomparable; any author who had created him might safely permit his future reputation to rest on that accomplishment alone. In this instance, however, the character is happily set in what can scarcely fail to be regarded as a permanent masterpiece.

BRIEFER MENTION

RICEYMAN STEPS, by Arnold Bennett (12mo, 386 pages; Doran: \$2). If the effect of vulgarity in Mr Bennett's work were not combined with unusual merits, the author of fifty-four books, including *Pocket Philosophies*, would have ceased long ago to come to the attention of a serious critic. His massive novels have a certain curious dignity, though it is threatened on every page by sly innuendoes, by self-conscious crudity, by mingled echoes of cynicism and sentimentality. The world of this disillusioned, business-like Dickens resembles reality; if his characters are not symbols, they are certainly types. Mr Bennett moves up and down the social ladder, now rather mechanically, the voluble spokesman of one class to another. *Riceyman Steps* portrays the life and character of a charwoman, and conveys the life of the poor, in its most obvious aspects, to the well-to-do.

LE VITRIOL DE LUNE, by Henry Béraud (16mo, 254 pages; Albin Michel: Paris) concerns the torture of Damiens and the conjectured poisoning of Louis XV: a story of hate and brutal love and brutality told without genius, but rapidly and well, somewhat in the manner of Anatole France. It is the better of the two novels by the same author which were crowned this year with the Prix Goncourt. Its author is a liberal in politics and quite as fat as Balzac; the award in other respects was totally unsensual. Briefly, *Le Vitriol de Lune* is the sort of book which wins a prize in France: no better and no worse than a prize-winning novel in America, but vastly different.

THE MIDDLE PASSAGE, by Daniel Chase (12mo, 273 pages; Macmillan: \$2) has its moments of authentic flavour—glimpses of a New England seaport in the days of clipper ships—which are rendered with colour and with pictorial definiteness; it has, in addition, such a free-handed allotment of villainy as to destroy most of the flavour. Mr Chase is not content with rascality on either land or sea; he requires it in both. Before one has finished, one suspects that he wrote with one eye on the “movies.”

A WEEK, by Iury Libedinsky, translated by Arthur Ransome (12mo, 247 pages; Huebsch: \$1.50). There is nothing revolutionary in this book, written by a young peasant whom the Russian Revolution woke to the deceptive release of words. The gropings, dilemmas, and martyrdoms of a community of human beings trapped by hunger and the ruthless delusions of a new faith, and drawing themselves mechanically across the drama of the upheaval, are transcribed with the guileless realism of an apostle's diary. This novel, free of literary sophistication and moving with the opaque and barren economy of peasant speech, is written with the impressive artlessness of the traditional Russians, who reveal themselves through an intensely calm disposal of souls whose histories become the allegories of a broad and primitive creative sadness.

THE HEIR, by V. Sackville-West (12mo, 250 pages; Doran: \$2) is a collection of stories in which theme and treatment are mutually exacting; they have been handled with delicacy and artistic indirection. People are sketched with swift and sympathetic strokes; there is not a blurred or wavering line from cover to cover. In conception and technique, these tales stand at a refreshing distance from the market-place of popular fiction.

THE MIDLANDER, by Booth Tarkington (12mo, 493 pages; Doubleday Page: \$2) is somewhat epic in intention, but slightly commonplace in execution. Mr Tarkington, when he turns from his *genre* studies of adolescence, is inclined to adopt facile classifications; not all Westerners are noble and not all Easterners are vapid. The romance of the old generation being supplanted by the new is here retold skilfully, but not memorably; it stems too patently from Meredith Nicholson.

THE CATHEDRAL FOLK, by Nicolai Lyeskov (12mo, 439 pages; Knopf: \$2.50) is rich in human values which appear—in the smooth, crisp translation of Isabel F. Hapgood—to have lost little of their savour. The author builds up his winding narrative around three priests—inhabitants of the Stary Gorod Cathedral's ecclesiastical quarters; he makes a truly Russian distinction at the start by stipulating that his novel is to deal not so much with people's lives as with their "manner of life." A story of deep penetration, picturesque in setting and leisurely in development.

MARCEL PROUST: an English Tribute, collected by C. K. Scott Moncrieff (12mo, 148 pages; Seltzer: \$1.75). The degree in which Proust extended the boundaries of the novelist's art is interestingly reflected in these papers. An adventurer in that art himself, he has set the critics to grubbing at its roots, to re-examining its origins and its growth and its possibilities. Besides an introduction by the editor and a character sketch by Stephen Hudson, the volume includes appraisals by such men as Conrad, Saintsbury, Bennett, Alec Waugh, Arthur Symons, A. B. Walkley, and Francis Birrell—the last named having appeared originally in *THE DIAL*.

THIS FINE-PRETTY WORLD, by Percy MacKaye (12mo, 197 pages; Macmillan: \$1.50) is a comedy of the Kentucky mountain fastnesses. The action is gayly extravagant, but never, except during the redundant half of the third act, is it a strain to watch. Mr MacKaye's attempt creatively to conserve the speech of the mountaineers is a triumph. The depressing strangeness of deciphering a mummified dialect or following the intricacies of a localized form of speech is completely absent. This is our language: not restricted and overworked by the unimaginative use of a public marshalled into literacy; but immanent and racy, constantly freshened by contact with individual minds closely attentive to differentiations in their environment and their own emotions, and unfettered by any standardization of expression. The effect on spectator and reader alike is one of vitality, at times of abandonment, of a buoyancy and beauty that should, if this were possible, be appropriated by the dully American speaking population of cities.

MASQUERADE, by Ben Ray Redman (12mo, 53 pages; McBride: \$1.50) contains Men, Women, and Words, perhaps the wittiest of the poems written in emulation of the Sweeney cycle, and the most brilliant, certainly, of the rhymed character sketches which compose the first part of Mr Redman's volume. All of them make pleasant reading. They describe familiar people, amusingly, with an irony not too profound, and unsubtle melodies, and are much more successful than the ambitious lyrics with which the volume closes.

COME HITHER, a collection of verse made by Walter de la Mare (8vo, 694 pages; Knopf: \$6) bears the promise seldom offered by anthologies of a selection based upon a rare poet's response to his own especial "genre" in poetry. The compiler has already become a legendary figure, the embodiment of certain childlike and romantic traditions, and here he tries to inveigle into practical harness the dark turf-cropping steeds of his enchanted stable. But the reader feels disappointed when he finds that in a fit of Quixotic humility the editor has wilfully omitted from his selection every one of his own compositions! Yet he includes Sassoon and Frost and Drinkwater and Gibson and Elinor Wylie; all of whom, though good enough poets in their own line, offend us when found in this draught of ancient sorcery, as if they were wasps in a honey-pot or acorns in a cup of curds and whey. If we are not to carp at the premeditated fantasticalness of the preface we have a right to protest when this nosegay of rosemary and rue turns out to include such alien gatherings.

THE POEMS OF CHARLES COTTON, edited by John Beresford (8vo, 420 pages; Boni & Liveright: \$4). Poetic afflatus which results in transport rather than induced hyperbole, is not found in these poems. We have in them as Coleridge says, "the milder muse"—even the mindless muse. An age of brilliance ought not to be commemorated in four hundred and twenty pages of conventional love, bucolic conviviality, and elaborate idleness. Nevertheless one considers with serious respect, the translator of Montaigne and the author with Izaak Walton of *The Compleat Angler* and it would be unfair to forget an occasional perfection.

BODY OF THIS DEATH, by Louise Bogan (12mo, 30 pages; McBride: \$1.50). Louise Bogan gives the impression of being an inexpert craftsman striving fitfully and inchoately to express that which defies expression. Her words are like the rough marble before the sculptor has applied his chisel; they are crudely hewn, jagged, and often only obscurely significant; the author appears to be grappling with substantial but formless conceptions which she cannot mould either because she has not the power, because she is insufficiently practiced, or because she lacks the patience of the skilled artist.

IN EXILE, by John Cournos (12mo, 66 pages; Boni & Liveright: \$1.50) is a volume whose charm is to be simple and barren of decoration. The poet, in direct words and metres more bald than rugged, attacks the conventions or sings of exile and love betrayed. There are platitudes of revolt more profoundly dull than the platitudes of convention, and Mr Cournos, as poet, approaches them too often.

POPULATION, by Harold Wright (12mo, 180 pages; Harcourt, Brace: \$1.25) is a summarizing of population problems by an economist who, despite his efforts at a dispassionate survey of all attitudes, is driven by his own facts to hold that the Malthusian threat is upon us, and that already the crowding of the earth manifests itself in poorer living conditions and a lower birth rate. This is a quietly persuasive book, and incidentally one which indicates that through the growth of industrialism the demands for an adequate social structure have become so vital and exacting that human virtue and ingenuity may be driven to the breaking point.

HIS RELIGION AND HERS, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (12mo, 300 pages; Century: \$1.75). Mrs Gilman having spent a good part of her life in bustling women out of the home is now nervously shocked—thoroughly aroused, indeed—to find that a new generation of unmarried girls have homes of their own where the duties of motherhood and "race responsibility" are not the most discussed topics of their lives. Mrs Gilman reiterates her old beliefs lucidly, sometimes convincingly, yet the old urbanity has now turned a trifle sour, the old eloquence a trifle shrill. One remembers one's debt to her however, and forgives.

THE STORY OF MAN AND WOMAN, by David P. Jackson, M. D. (12mo, 252 pages; Dorrance: \$2). There are in every age either anxious or embittered gentlemen who make it their especial province in life to point out that the devotion of womanhood toward the male of the species should for the good of all concerned be kept at its highest point of efficiency and disinterestedness through every hour of the livelong day from birth unto death. Dr Jackson goes even further and carries it beyond death. He sees in wifehood "a permanent rôle for women which will continue to fill in a life without end in *Paradise Restored*." In the present age when women seem so rapidly to be getting out of control we can hardly blame such unworldly and dependent people as Dr Jackson for feeling slightly on tenter-hooks. We can but hope that if there are any little girls in his own family the excellent doctor may be spared the distress of seeing them reach that dangerous age when they begin to steal secretly away from his sentimental and age-old admonishments into an adventurous world which he has never permitted himself to contemplate.

THE DOMINANT SEX, by Mathilde and Mathias Vaerting, translated from the German by Eden and Cedar Paul (12mo, 289 pages; Doran: \$3) is the initial volume of a series of studies in which the authors propose a "refounding" of the comparative psychology of the sexes. In it the thesis is upheld that the difference in capacity and conduct existing between men and women is a difference depending solely upon which sex happens to be in the ascendant. From the customs of various ancient tribes and races the Vaertings erect a cunning edifice of data. If here and there a beam is missing the structure may still be said to remain firm against the attacks of irate anti-feminists. Whether it will continue to do so in the face of later research one cannot say, but it is at least safe to assert that this book will remain for a long time an interesting and suggestive study of the sociological factor of sex differentiation.

COMMENT

MISS ELIZABETH LUTHER CARY is the art critic of an exotic sheet which I myself do not come across so often as I should wish. I believe it goes by the name of "The New York Times." I am further informed that for a good many years now Miss Elizabeth Luther Cary has there been breaking silence—and always in a dignified manner—weekly.

Under the caption Modern Art of One Kind and Another Miss Cary, upon January twenty-seventh, stepped intelligently about the Dial folio, Living Art. She was generous in the space she allotted. She gave us a full page. This, together with the delicate matter of her sex, has been called to my attention as a reason for not mentioning her in this place. But, after all, her paper allots likewise a page (in accordance, I am told, with the contemporary custom of journals of this daily sort) to advertising the virtues of Messrs Hiram & Irving Bloomingdale's "Women's silk full-fashioned lace clocked hose" and "High grade refrigerators." And in these days ladies are all about us.

Since, some years back, that gifted Terpsichorean, Mr Willie Howard, distinguished me with a rhymed poem, I have read nothing with so much relish as these gentle and balanced paragraphs from the more refined—and scarcely less illustrious—Miss Cary.

Miss Cary begins by paraphrasing my preface to the folio. By the very delicate "planting" (I employ the word in the sense in which it generally does service in the journal in question) of such phrases as "considered so supremely and fundamentally important that their work, albeit in oil," Miss Cary contrives to assimilate myself to her own agreeably flattering conception of me.

This process of assimilation of a new idea to something already familiar, and by that familiarity (and sometimes for other good reasons) dear to the unconscious, is a process common to us all. Yet Miss Cary does, three columns farther on, give us a most uncommonly nice example of the same delicate indecorum.

Now Miss Cary, like the late Mr Comstock, is naturally more familiar with the very modern oil-painting entitled September Morn than with things French in general. September Morn has occupied an honoured place in the show-windows of our great

metropolitan and cosmopolitan department and drug stores. She who rode might read.

Hence Miss Cary's little assimilation: "A pen-and-ink drawing of a Spring morning (why . . . should a proofreader have balked at the spelling of so simple a word as 'morn') the artist André Dunoyer de Segonzac, the picture, little slim trees shaken with merriment like giggling girls," et cetera, et cetera. Miss Cary read the title of this picture, *The Morin in Spring*. Not being familiar with the chief rivers of France, and apparently not being furnished by this journal, *The Times*, with a map of that country, and harbouring in her unconscious a potent and indelible image of that masterpiece, *September Morn*, and being, after all, but a poor human woman, she brightly and automatically assimilated "Morin" to "morn." *September Morn* represented a river-scene too, and the girl in it, no doubt, was the supple springboard to Miss Cary's poetical likening of Segonzac's "slim trees" to "giggling girls." Though, for my part, I do not remember the young woman in *September Morn* as particularly giggling. Perhaps that came after she saw Mr. Comstock.

Further (to somewhat change the subject) in writing about the Russian sculptor, Alexander Archipenko, Miss Cary jauntily intuits that this gentleman "feels" that he "expresses" the people's "demand for quantity production." The most aristocratic of contemporary sculptors can learn from Miss Cary a lot.

Upon the page following her "criticism" of Living Art and immediately before her "criticism" of Alexander Archipenko, Miss Cary skims a "dauntless . . . Pentelic marble," a "captivating creature" by Gaston Lachaise. Miss Cary, just by the by (always skimmingly, as is her beautiful wont) further attributes to this artist hounds. M Lachaise from reading her informative page learned for the first time (tardily, it would seem) of this, his agreeable paternity.

Since Miss Cary continues to receive good money from *The New York Times*, it is, quite obviously, possible to be of two minds as to her artistic taste. And as to her possession of the old-fashioned virtue of accuracy, it is no longer possible to remain in doubt.

THE DIAL is taking up a modest collection for the benefit of *The New York Times*. It is our desire to enable this ambitious contemporary to purchase an atlas of France.

THE THEATRE

IT would be an unforgivable perversity to refuse to write about **THE MIRACLE** in this chronicle of the theatre. For the sake of my standing as a citizen I wish that I had received from that spectacle even the smallest item of the spirituality which it is popularly supposed to convey and which alone could justify it. The magnificence and the beauty of Norman-Bel Geddes' investiture are a monument to the possibilities of the stage when worked upon by a rich imagination prospered by generosity and intelligence. I would not for a moment detract from the glory of Messrs Reinhardt and Gest and Kahn. But I counsel them to look at the book of drawings and models published by the Theatre Arts and discover there whether the Dante spectacle imagined by Mr Geddes be not better material for their interest. The Maeterlinck-Vollmoeller-Humperdinck **MIRACLE** is tawdry in spots and unbearably uninteresting in whole sections; it is good spectacle intermittently and has superb dramatic moments; the whole hasn't the possibility of giving exaltation. Werner Kraus did most to give it intensity and Lady Diana Manners had a moment of rare loveliness—in the resumption of the statue. Reinhardt's own work was superbly done, with a lavish imagination and an unequalled skill in detail. But for me everything fine in **THE MIRACLE** is something to think about, not to feel; and the reason is in the paradox that **THE MIRACLE** itself, the original stuff, will hardly bear thinking of.

The other spiritual play of the moment is *Outward Bound*. Here the elaboration consisted only in procuring a faultless cast, in combining the separate excellences of Beryl Mercer, Margolo Gillmore, Alfred Lunt, J. M. Kerrigan, Dudley Digges, and Leslie Howard under the direction of Robert Milton, and allowing them to play with smoothness and skill a play which is pure theatre. Were it anything else, a real drama of the soul, the melodramatic discovery that the Channel steamer is really Charon's Ferry would be hideously out of place. Everything is in place because Mr Sutton Vane apparently knew exactly where he was going from beginning to end, because he recognized completely the value of his stunt idea, and because he omitted almost all the cant and nonsense

about Death which one usually expects in plays of this sort. It was not required of him to add anything new; the major requirement of an interesting play he fulfilled.

MISTER PITI did little to restore the balance so heavily against American plays. The material is superb, the handling deplorable. Miss Zona Gale made the dramatization out of her own novel, Birth, and in doing so fairly boxed the compass, for the play runs in every direction except the one which its early scenes demand—the direction of a comedy of character. The impression of uncertainty was heightened by lackadaisical management on the opening night and by the definite excellence of Walter Huston in the gentle and appealing comedy of the beginning, an excellence which deserved further scope and which was not nearly so marked in the melodrama and psychological wanderings of the later acts. Mr Brock Pemberton's simultaneous production of *THE LIVING MASK* (Pirandello's *HENRY IV*) was far better and Arnold Korff's acting was extraordinarily fine in all the shiftings and variations required by an interesting play. Like most of Pirandello, it is a bit bookish. One of the finest *ideas* in it is not implicated in *action* at all; it is the idea that one lives in absolute independence by the creation of another, even if it be a lunatic, world as a background. A flood of speech is on all the characters of the first act, and most of what they say remains irrelevant to the bitter end. But forgiving that, you have before you a play of actual intensity and of good drama.

André Charlot's *REVUE* is having a *chic* success which it deserves. The Chaplinesque Miss Lillie and Gertrude Lawrence, as *ingénue*, are full of delight, and British rowdiness and irreverence are always acceptable. It is interesting to note that a first rate British revue has about the same faults as a first rate American one, and that its level of sophistication on the literary side is so much greater; on the side of music, dance, and production the level is far lower than ours. Bearing in mind the pomposities of production which so nearly ruin many of Mr Berlin's numbers at the Music Box, I hesitate to say that Limehouse Blues would be better done by ourselves, but I think we would have released the music more easily. On the other hand, none of us could have done better with *March With Me*.

GILBERT SELDES

MODERN ART

ALTHOUGH not so wholly satisfactory as might be wished nevertheless the status of American art abroad is not so bad. In fact it is looking up. We have had three exhibitions over there and may have more before the season ends. The Mrs Whitney group has already returned, elated, apparently, to be still living after the experience; and now George Biddle and Max Weber are showing Paris. The formidable French critics were most kind to our "group." They said that each of these Americans was one hundred per cent French and that, of course, was intended as a compliment. Waldemar George, in *L'Amour de l'Art*, even went so far as to suspect that the first symptoms of Americanism in art could be detected in the work of these "*peintres new-yorkais*," but did not further particularize. The Max Weber reviews have not yet come to hand, but doubtless Max will fare better than these others. For one thing he is better known in Paris, his discipleship to Henri Rousseau having affixed him considerably in the old days; and then too he is a slashing painter. As to his Americanism, that's as it may be. His art is very Jewish. That's its strength. They will probably decide that it "derives from the French"—as it undoubtedly does—but if they discover that it breaks new ground they will discover more than Mr Weber's friends here have done. He paints in a masterly fashion, most of us think, but well within the formulas so well advertised by Matisse, Picasso, and Rousseau.

On the whole this yearned for Americanism is hard to locate, even here on the spot. Of those who have been showing here lately, and whom we own, Yasuo Kuniyoshi is the most likely to strike our French friends as a definite person. Yet, of course, they'd have to be told he is American. That he should not succeed in Paris is incredible, but even if he did not we should not mind. We'd say to ourselves, comfortably, "Paris doesn't know," and raise the prices of Kuniyoshis among ourselves as we did the Winslow Homers. But the first sets of drawings that Kuniyoshi showed here must have succeeded in a land that produced a Redon. They are not Redon, but pure Kuniyoshi, yet they have the same crisp vision and the short shading off of velvet blacks into shiny whites that

marks the work of the French visionary and which seems to hint that both artists read nature by flashes of lightning. As a visionary Kuniyoshi has not quite mounted the cliffs to Redonesque heights—he is too young, happy, and unconcerned about death for that—but he certainly sings the songs of inexperience with heaven-endowed accents. In the exhibition of this winter trouble for those who had not seen the first exhibition developed. It began to appear that one must learn the first Kuniyoshi lesson before taking up the second. He goes on now to a more direct inquiry into the domestic manners of the Americans and his researches into the particulars of Maine summer life bore unexpected results. Kuniyoshi is still a seer and the young lady art students arising from the waves that beat upon that rock-bound coast are nymphs, sirens, or even pre-Greeks to him; with the snub noses and nasal voices of to-day connecting up with the sparkle of eye and freshness of movement that life in any era has; Kuniyoshi being one who generalizes, as Emerson counsels, from the single example. Then there are the startling babies that have replaced the cows of Kuniyoshi's early affection, that have a vim, an authority, a size, and even a vulgarity—that may well frighten Europeans—disposed to be frightened of us anyhow—particularly when informed that these babies are authentic and horribly like the real thing. In short, robustness as these hints imply, seems to have crept into Kuniyoshi's new work. It is as compact, as completely realized as ever his work was, but just because it is noisier it is the more disconcerting to him who meets it for the first time this year. Those who were already won, it must be stated, stayed won; the chorus among the believers was enthusiastically to the effect that Kuniyoshi has become one of our most considerable personages and an artist in whose work the discerning could take inexhaustible delight.

The two Europeans who gave us most recent pleasure were Hermine David and Max Jacob—both of the improved-amateur type. Mme David, who came to this country on the outbreak of war, painted a few water-colours in the south, presumably to beguile the tedium of a stay in a foreign land. These—it is vastly to our credit—were promptly purchased by certain amateurs “just because they liked them” and without thought of pecuniary gain. Lately Mme David has been heard of, as exhibiting from time to time in the France to which she returned when peace was declared,

but few among us were prepared for so large a show as she gave in the Brummer Galleries nor for such a satisfactory one. She still guards the spontaneity with which she began as an artist, but amateurishness is scarcely the word for an art that arrives at its effects with such precision. I created some confusion in certain quarters, I find, by expatiating at length upon the Paris note as sounded by Mme David—a note that some of my friends have failed to identify. I must insist that Mme David is a genius *loci* although she does not give all the facts, but only a few. It is enough for me to see a single balcony in a drawing by Mme David to feel that I am again in Paris. She sees the real ones, those with twisted rails and uncertain platforms that hang from almost any building in Montmartre or Montparnasse. A balcony, a glimpse of a garden or a corner café, and I have all I need in the way of a Parisian outlook—the others may have their Madeleines and their Notre Dames as they like.

Max Jacob is quite as Paris, too, though in a different way. He registers a long and unwavering devotion to the street acrobats and to the less familiar *cirques* and many who share in this cult suddenly found themselves liking the drawings of Max Jacob without in the least being aware that the author of them already enjoyed a considerable reputation as a writer. That New York should have been ignorant of Max Jacob is curious.

HENRY McBRIDE

MUSICAL CHRONICLE

AFTER the concert, the streets were full of Varèse's music. The taxi squeaking to a halt at the crossroad gave a theme of it. Timbres and motifs were sounded by police whistles, motor-horns barking and moaning, sea-cows mooing from the river, steam-drills chattering in the garish night-light of fifty foot excavations. But one heard the familiar blasts and threats from a thousand mechanical beasts with new sharpness, new humour, new objectivity. Inside the Vanderbilt theatre, overtones of sirens and noises had flown molten in the clear hard stream of a music. They had been lifted from out of their natural separateness and made integral portions of a homogeneous organism of tone, a strange powerful symphony of new sounds, new stridencies, new abrupt accents, new acrid richnesses of harmony.

Wagner used to perceive in his imagination people making gestures and saying words; and when he had finished recording the gestures, and giving the words as he heard them, a musical score had come into being, and the gestures and the people and the words had disappeared from his mind. A process similar to Wagner's seems to enable the most newly come of creative musicians to fuse the elements which nature throws up about him into the body of musical art. Edgar Varèse's compositions appear to begin in him as an idea, a feeling, usually a sense of tempo. He has always had an intense susceptibility to acute, high, strident noises. As a small boy, while reading some of the Leatherstocking stories, the feeling of the prairies began to be associated in his mind with the sound of a very shrill, bitter-high whistle. This image has persisted in his imagination, although he has never heard its actual replica anywhere in nature. Besides, his father was a mechanical engineer, and it is probable that for this reason the world of technique, of engines and of steel, has ever had a peculiar wonder for him. Here, in New York, it is West Street, with its tootings and rumblings, its iron sheds and high ship sides and steel plates and monster cranes, that excites him most. The impressions of mechanical sounds are received part consciously, part quite unconsciously: in Hyperprism, one of Varèse's compositions, there is a re-iterated very

shrill high c-sharp, and during the performance of the work, it brought convulsive laughter out of the audience; but when the composer returned to his home in Eighth Street that evening, and sat awake working, he heard from over the city somewhere a very familiar sound, a siren, and suddenly realized that he had been hearing it for many nights, over six months, during the time he composed Hyperprism, and that the tone was exactly a very shrill high c-sharp. And, when he comes to flesh the excited feeling of tempo, the subjective impression or dream, the natural sounds of which the tempo and the impressions are to some extent the offspring reappear under his hand in the web of a musical design, floated and integrated on the tide of a single informing principle.

Hence, Varèse has already succeeded in achieving what Marinetti and his Italian group set out to do, and failed. The Italians were hindered in expressing themselves through the sounds of the modern landscapes by the limitation of the instruments which they had made for themselves. Their noise-makers are so excessively circumscribed in range and in timbre that scarcely anything more than crude imitations of nature can be produced on them. But a work of art is always pure idea as well as simulacrum; and the idea can be bodied forth only through a series of more or less complex relationships of a sort in which the *bruiteurs* cannot be made to participate. Even when they are played in attempted combination with some of the older instruments, their sounds remain in a sort of meaningless separateness. But Varèse, moving out from an idea, has discovered means of compelling the older instruments in certain combinations with instruments of the battery to give the new sensations heard by him, and of holding them in the grasp of an organism. Octandre, the composition played at the Vanderbilt Theatre the evening of January thirteenth, with all its wealth of new sounds and accents, its intense stridency and acerbity, nevertheless was perfectly co-ordinated and impelled by inward necessity. It merely pushed music along the road of certain tendencies marked out in Strawinsky, Ornstein, and Schoenberg. The past was solidly behind it. "*Verliess er uns're Gleise, Schritt er doch fest und unbeirrt.*"

The three small movements were hard of surface and machine-sharp of edge, deeply colourful at moments and beautiful with intense economy and concentratedness. The themes were

stated in cablegram style, and the idea developed itself continually. There was no doubling of parts; the eight instruments: flute alternating with piccolo, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, French horn, trumpet, trombone, string doublebass, played with great independence. What general scheme the movements follow could not be gathered from the two hearings even though it was apparent that the work moved through a counterplay of tonal thicknesses of various degrees, and that the instruments played in very terse and concentrated counterpoint. The three parts stood solid as objects of brass. Apparent slight reminiscences of Wagner (the "solitude" of Tristan Act III in the opening recitative, the re-iterated e-flat which commences the scene between Wotan and Siegfried in the close of the second movement with its stammering clarinet) disappeared during the second performance.

Edgar Varèse was born in Paris December 22, 1885. His father was Italian, his mother of Burgundian stock. Varèse studied to be an engineer until he was seventeen, working in mathematics and the physical sciences. Gannaye was his first master in composition. From 1904 to 1905 he worked at the Schola Cantorum, studying composition with d'Indy and counterpoint and fugue with Albert Roussel. The next year, he took Widor's master course in composition at the Conservatoire. He has also had consultations with Debussy, Muck, and Strauss. His symphonic poem Bourgoyne was played by Stransky in Berlin in 1910. Varèse came to America in 1916, and conducted, under immense difficulties in the spring of 1917, a memorable performance of Berlioz' Requiem at the Hippodrome. He has lived in America ever since. Deux Offrandes for voice and small orchestra and percussion was performed in 1921; Hyperprism in 1922. Other compositions are La Chanson Des Jeunes Hommes (1905); La Rhapsodie Romane (1906); Prelude a la Fin d'un Jour (1908); Mehr Licht (1911); Le Cycle du Nord (1912); Amériques (1922).

Last month, in this very space, we demanded to know who was the man destined to lead the art of music onward from Strawinsky's into fresh virgin realms of sound.

One answer has come very quickly.

PAUL ROSENFIELD

ually.
flute
horn,
inde-
d not
parent
nesses
terse
us ob-
“solici-
rated
ed in
) dis-

ather
to be
d the
tion.
lying
lbert
com-
with
oyne
erica
ng of
Hip-
ndes
d in
nson
6);
cycle

was
ky's

D